



PS3
PlayStation 3

PSP
PlayStation Portable

PlayStation 2



PlayStation Network

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 58 AUGUST 2011
100% Australian Content

HANDS-ON! ▶
PLAYSTATION
VITA

So much more
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but was it worth the wait?

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gaming couldn't
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26-PAGE SPECIAL

In-depth at E3 30

OPS flies over to sunny Los Angeles, California, to get amongst the biggest gaming event of the year. Games were played, developers were hounded and drinks were drunk, repeatedly. Here are the results.



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We dive into Sucker Punch's shockingly good sandbox and see what's what. It turns out that *inFAMOUS 2* is a runaway steam train powered by Cole.



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Say goodbye to NGP and say hello to the handheld that offers serious pocket power, the Vita. It sounds like it's got the grains to take on the big cheese.

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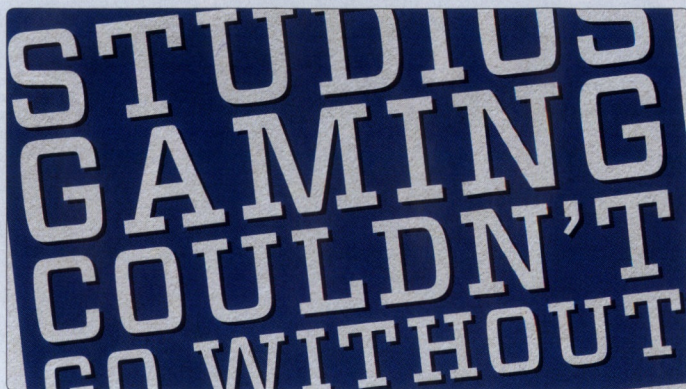
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Our resident Sackperson pauses venting his spleen only to channel douchebag Carter Pinsky instead. The results are just as worrying as they are hilarious.

► INSIDER

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Opinion

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Duke Nukem Forever

Your long-awaited closure on gaming's most horrendously delayed game

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Battlefield 3

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The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Final Fantasy XIII-2

Far Cry 3

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

F1 2011

SSX

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The crews behind the biggest games and the most popular technology.

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Mortal Kombat

LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean

MX vs. ATV Alive

SBK 2011

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Meet the team

**Paul Taylor****Deputy Editor**

LA, I used to think you were dirty, hellish and disgusting. I still do, but I love you for it.

Playing: *Shadows of the Damned*

Wanting: *Driver: SF*

**Stephanie Goh****Art Director**

I've been radiating sunshine thanks to my recent holiday. Oh, hi reality.

Playing: *Portal 2*

Wanting: *Assassin's Creed Revelations*

**Adam Mathew****Associate Editor**

I've been liking DNF more than anyone else it seems. Seriously, it's a time capsule. It's supposed to look old.

Playing: *DNF*

Wanting: *DNF: Forever*

**James Cottee****Contributor**

Capcom has no new *Monster Hunter* for Vita yet. But I'm not worried. It's... it's just waiting for the right time, that's all...

Playing: *Portal 2*

Wanting: *Sound Shapes*

**James Ellis****Contributor**

Shortly there will only be two kinds of peeps wearing pyjamas in the day time: billionaires and *Skyrim*-ers.

Playing: *Oblivion*

Wanting: *Skyrim*

**Nathan Lawrence****Contributor**

Has learnt the firsthand harsh realities that there is an am equivalent of 5pm... and it is not fun.

Playing: *inFAMOUS 2*

Wanting: *Skyrim*

**Dave Kozicki****Contributor**

I want to smash people in the face with a large purple dildo in *Saints Row: The Third*. Best. Weapon. Ever.

Playing: *Brink*

Wanting: *Saints Row: TT*

**Toby McCasker****Contributor**

Man, why did the cellar-dwellers and Japanese hate on E3? Where were the awesome RPGs and *Catherine*?

Playing: *Dungeon Siege III*

Wanting: *Catherine*

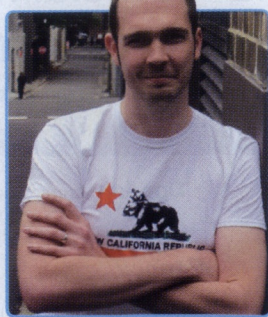
**Angry Sackboy****Contributor**

Wild E3 parties nearly unstitched me completely. Sackboy is quite literally stuffed right now.

Playing: *L.A. Noire*

Wanting: *N.Y. Noire*

Editorial



The long-overdue arrival of *Duke Nukem Forever* is a noteworthy event. The quality of the final

product aside, the very fact that the game has been released after all this time borders on remarkable. No game has taken longer to go from initial announcement to store shelves.

The end result is disappointing really, the ultimate anticlimax to a 15-year gestation. A few years back, maybe at the tail end of last generation, *Duke Nukem*

Forever would've fared better. In 2011 it's just too little, too late. But you can check out the review on page 66 for more detail.

There was, however, one interesting and lasting impression that playing *Duke Nukem Forever* left on me. It's a personal thing so it's largely irrelevant to the review itself, although it may resonate with you.

Above everything, playing *Duke Nukem Forever* simply reminded me I'm not a kid anymore. It's an easy thing to forget in an industry where we play games for a living and any given day could see the arrival of, say, a customised Nerf pulse rifle masquerading as a press release for *Aliens: Colonial Marines*.

When I was 13 years old I remember going with my parents to visit an uncle of mine, my mother's younger brother. I used to like going there because he had a sweet PC and we'd play *Duke Nukem 3D*. At the time there was nothing else like it. I remember being completely transfixed. At home all I had to pass the time was *Commander Keen*, *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* and *Wolfenstein 3D*. I recall our computer had already pissed its pantsuit at the sight of *Strike Commander* so *Duke Nukem 3D* was absolutely out of the question.

What *Duke Nukem Forever* has done is reinforce just how much everything has changed in the last 15 years. 15 years ago I was a small kid watching *Duke Nukem 3D* at my uncle's flat. 15 years later he's at my house and I'm playing *Duke Nukem Forever*.

In that time I've completed school, university and over seven years in games journalism. In that time I've lost a close relative and a best friend but gained a wife, a son and a daughter. In that time so much has happened, but suddenly it feels like a flash.

I imagine a lot of you would have similar stories; where were you 15 years ago? Perhaps you were a teenager too. Perhaps you were older than that, or younger. Perhaps you weren't even born yet.

They do say time flies when you're having fun. I guess, whoever they are, they're right.

Luke Reilly
Editor

Playing: *Duke Nukem Forever*

Wanting: *Driver: San Francisco*

SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? Love? Wrong. A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotchies? No. Please stop abusing our rhetorical system.

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Distributed by Network Services Company in Australia and Netlink in NZ.

Printed by CaxtonWeb Pty Ltd.

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Special thanks: Vinnie :: Nicole :: Lucy :: Luke Mathew :: Ella Indiana :: LD :: NSW :: The loose-hoop gang :: Cabo Cantina :: Kranzl :: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner :: Stead :: All the Bees :: Guillaume



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This Month

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PlayStation Vita

Portable gaming goes next-gen



Formally announced at E3 as the PlayStation Vita (pronounced Vee-tah), the successor to the PSP will be available later this year in some countries. A formal date for Australia and New Zealand wasn't announced, nor was a price, though some retailers are already taking preorders.

The device is poised to reinvigorate the handheld market with impressive technology powering killer titles, and the extra input methods will offer new possibilities for playing games. We waited in an hour-long queue at this year's E3 to get hands on time with the Vita and we left wanting more. It's larger than we first expected it to be but still feels fairly light. Everything felt natural under our hands so if you've ever clutched a DualShock or PSP you'll be familiar with the layout.

It's very responsive and it feels great to have two thumbsticks to play with for action titles. The sticks themselves have a comfortable amount of movement and are much more natural to use than the PSP's nub, but don't travel as far as those on a DualShock. Of course, the 12.7cm screen is touch sensitive and is married to a

touch sensitive panel on the back, as well as SIXAXIS-like controls. In some of the games we played we were able to control the action on screen by flicking at the screen or by tilting the Vita itself. The screen itself has a resolution of 960 x 544 screen – that's a better resolution than your old CRT TV – and the OLED display shows off stunning colours. There's no 3D, though. The reason?

"We chose the best feature set we thought relevant for a next generation portable platform," said Michael Denny, Vice President of Sony Worldwide Studios. "At this point in time we left 3D out because we thought it wasn't important to our Vita platform given all the feature sets we have... I think the variety and number of user interfaces for such a device is unprecedented, [meaning] no compromises for shooting games, action games or fighting games."

The Vita also has a camera mounted near the front screen and also on the back, and some augmented reality titles are being developed using both markers (similar to that used in Eye Peñ) and also using the gyroscope. While it

seems like a lot of stuff to use all at the same time, some games may use the camera in conjunction with the gyroscope to monitor how they're being played, rather than requiring you to use each individual function.

It's not all about games, though that's probably the reason you're lusting after one – big franchises are coming to the device (see boxout). The Vita incorporates clever social networking features so you can connect with your friends and other Vita owners.

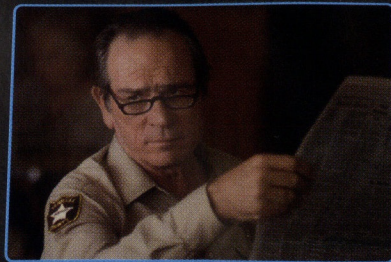
"Vita was designed from the ground up to be a socially connected device," said Denny.

One idea is that of 'gifting', so you leave virtual items in a location for someone else to pick up. Whilst we didn't get the specific details on this feature, we assume that you'll put a digital gift in the real world using GPS coordinates, and then a friend will have to go to that spot and collect it. We also suspect that you'll get the most out of this feature if you have the 3G + Wi-Fi model, though a Wi-Fi-only model will also be available.

All this, in your hands, later this year (hopefully), and (more than likely) for less than \$350. Start saving.

In Short

A brief look at this month's news



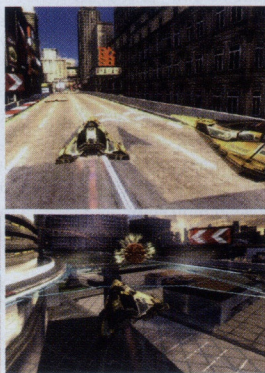
Issue 58 August 2011

► Gamers, rejoice. Here is a short list of titles in development for the Vita, and what we know about them



Wipeout 2048

Designed specifically for Vita, casual players are going to dig tilting the screen to steer, while the back panel takes care of accelerating. You can also link up via PSN to race PS3 owners and have a blast on *Fury*.



LittleBigPlanet

'Accessible' is the buzz-word. We controlled Sackboy in the same way we did on PS3, but we had to manipulate some material with our fingers, and interact with a piano using the touch panels. Felt very natural to play this way. Amazingly, you can also play all the levels that have been created in *LBP2*. Already shaping up as the game to own.

Shinobido 2

A sneak 'em up ninja sim. This is a sequel to the PS2 game and plays like a standard action game.

ModNation Racers

Creating a track in *ModNation Racers* is as simple as putting your finger on the screen and drawing the outline. Then it's a matter of fine-tuning and adding embellishments like valleys and mountains by rubbing on the front touch screen or on the back touch-sensitive pad respectively.

Uncharted: Golden Abyss

Set before the events in *Uncharted* this is still a 'proper' Drake title and it's another visually spectacular game. Trace a line onscreen and Nate will follow, and you can swipe your finger over ledges to send him on his way. We preferred using the thumbsticks.

Street Fighter X Tekken

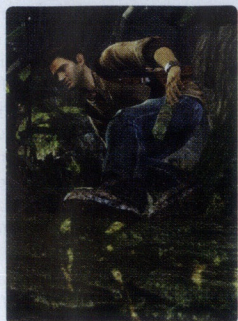
Cole from *inFAMOUS 2* will be a selectable character, complete with signature moves such as the Ionic Storm. It looks real pretty, and will use the touch panels to complete special moves.

Little Deviants

A bunch of pretty cool minigames utilising all of the Vita's tech, from the cameras to the touch panels and the gyro. Early impressions suggest it'll appeal to casual players, but it's a good way to demonstrate the device's capabilities.

Sound Shapes

Jonathon Mak, the bloke who made *Everyday Shooter*, presents this music-platformer. You control a ball and must collect items while avoiding enemies, but you create music depending on how you play. Better than it sounds and you can create unique levels in less than a minute.



Virtua Tennis 4

Technically the same as the PS3 version but the touch controls were pretty redundant and pretty horrible to use. It's the only game we didn't enjoy playing on the Vita as we just couldn't get our player to drive the ball where we wanted it. Solution: thumbsticks.

Reality Fighters

An augmented reality fighting game that uses the Vita's gyroscope to put virtual characters on the street, on your desk, or even on your dad's head (maybe).

Super Stardust Delta

You know *Super Stardust*, right? It's that, but on Vita, and looking superb. Those thumbsticks are going to be thrashed.

BioShock

Yes, really. We didn't see any footage, but we did see and hear Ken Levine say it was coming. Word is it's a unique game and not a just port of *BioShock Infinite*.

Ruin

In this action-based RPG you can save your game in 'the cloud', allowing you to play it on your PS3 and then continue the action on Vita, and vice versa. Or Vita versa if you want to be a nerd.

Dust 514

This MMO shooter interacts with the EVE universe, and you'll be able to play it on your PS3 and Vita. Due out next year.

► Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime has confirmed footage of third-party titles seen in the Wii U reveal was actually generated from PC, **PlayStation 3** and Xbox 360 versions.

► After some particularly scathing **Duke Nukem Forever** reviews Gearbox/2K public relations company, The Redner Group, released the following post on Twitter: "Many went too far with their reviews...we [sic] reviewing who gets games next time and who doesn't based on today's venom." 2K distanced itself from The Redner Group a day later by firing them. "2K Games does not endorse or condone the comments made by @TheRednerGroup and confirm they no longer represent our products," said the company in a Twitter post of its own. "We maintain a mutually respectful relationship with the press and will continue to do so. We don't condone @TheRednerGroup's actions at all."

► Publishing rights to the underrated **Psychonauts** (and thus its future profits) have now expired and have been returned to Tim Schafer's studio, Double Fine.

► The caddy feature in **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters** will return.

► The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) has announced that **E3 2011** welcomed 46,800 attendees and will return June 5-7, 2012, to the Los Angeles Convention Centre.

► Independent **Just Cause 2** developer Avalanche Studios is opening a studio in New York City. "Kaos and THQ Digital suffers from the twists and turns of the games biz. You are more than welcome to join the Avalanche Studios US family!" Avalanche Studios founder Christofer Sundberg posted on Twitter. The NYC studio will include "senior staff" from Stockholm and will be recruiting other candidates from the area.

► THQ's Danny Bilson has said, despite the closure of Kaos Studios, the company is still planning on releasing more **Homefront** titles.

► Obsidian would love to make **Alpha Protocol 2** but it isn't because nobody is asking.

► **Carmageddon: Reincarnation** announced. No platforms announced but may be a PSN title.

► Don't expect a sequel to **Split/Second**.

► Two whole desks were cut from **L.A. Noire** – Burglary and Bunko (Fraud) – earlier during development. Here's hoping for some more DLC.

► No courtesans in **Assassin's Creed Revelations**.

► The Japanese release of **MotorStorm Apocalypse** has been quietly cancelled.

► Naughty Dog big cheese Evan Wells has confirmed **Uncharted** "wasn't conceived as a trilogy." Every *Uncharted* game is a stand-alone adventure – so there's no reason not to keep making them. Sweet.

► Kojima Productions would love to do a proper remake of the original **Metal Gear Solid**.

► **Exclusive extras** coming to the PS3 versions of three EA games include an exclusive Mt. Fuji level for *SSX*, seven exclusive supercars (including the Bugatti Veyron) for *Need for Speed The Run* and a free copy of *Battlefield 1943* with *Battlefield 3*.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A ... MAGICIAN?

OPTION 1

It might look like fun and games but being a magician is serious business. Matt Hollywood, one of Australia's leading magicians, dodges death throughout the 300 shows he performs each year, performing for a host of A-list celebrities and dignitaries in Australia and overseas.

Learning rudimentary magic is pretty straightforward, as you can go to the magic shop, and what you see there is the standard stuff: think the vanishing coin trick. Then there are the big time guys who make tricks for David Copperfield and the other big illusionists around the world. When you visit these guys, says Hollywood, "it's like a shop for big boys as these illusions are expensive. If you want something decent the tricks start at about \$20,000 through to \$100,000 plus." That's for an illusion you would be proud to show off at Las Vegas.

"I spend, roughly, \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year to keep the show feeling fresh," admits Hollywood. But, along with paying loads of money you need to sink loads of time into getting it right: it takes up to seven years of practice of that one illusion before you'd put it in the show.

Some are the effects are dangerous. Hollywood highlights his teleportation stunt as particularly risky. "I might get locked or shackled inside a big cage, set [it] on fire and then have 30 seconds to escape before a rope burns through and sends giant blades into the cage. What'll happen is one second before the blades come down I pull my hands out, the blades swing through and instantly I disappear and teleport to the back of the room. It's all about timing."

It's not just about the magic. Anyone can make something disappear and people will think 'wow!' but if you don't have the personality to go 'Tada!' and really carry it off and entertain them at the same time, you have nothing. You either have it or you don't; it's a confidence thing.

Being a magician is like any other business. You get it underway and you try to pay the bills, and how successful you make it is up to the individual.

TIME:

You need to join the Australian Society of Magicians, which involves taking six months of courses to be part of this magic fraternity. But, you need to be proficient to show them you're serious about joining. Then you need to practice -- a good starting point is two to three hours daily. Hollywood has been practicing and performing for 20 years.

OPTION 2

Turn on *Harry Potter* and the *Deathly Hallows Part 1*

TIME:

Two minutes

► TIMELINE

Duke Nukem Whenever

The *Duke Nukem Forever* saga from the beginning

The *Duke Nukem Forever* timeline is a long and exhausting one.

"I've been, for many years, like all of you. I've been on the outside watching the story of this game's development," Gearbox Software's Randy Pitchford told us during a recent *Duke Nukem Forever* multiplayer event in Kings Cross, Sydney. "And it's been absurd. It's been ridiculous."

"A lot of people don't know this but my first videogame I worked on as a professional was in the mid '90s when I moved to Dallas, Texas and I

joined 3D Realms and I became part of the *Duke Nukem 3D* team.

"Because I'd been part of *Duke 3D* and because I'd been part of 3D Realms I've been asked a lot over the years, 'Hey, when do you think it's gonna ship Randy? You gotta know something. Have you talked to George [Broussard]? Have you seen the game?' I used to make a bet and the bet was I'd ask the person that asked me that 'When do YOU think it's gonna ship?' and I'd bet them, 'I tell you what: why don't you pick any date that you think is reasonable and I'll bet you

any amount of money you'd like to bet that it comes out after that point?' And I never lost that bet.

"The dream was very simple: it was *Duke Nukem Forever* must be a worthy successor to *Duke Nukem 3D* but as a consequence of their commitment... *Duke Nukem Forever* has become the most extreme edge case in the entire game industry. In the history of the game industry there is no game that's had a longer development cycle, not even close. It's one of a kind."

Duke Nukem Forever is reviewed on page 66.

JANUARY 1996

Duke Nukem 3D is released and leaves 3D Realms swimming in cash. A sequel is a no-brainer.

APRIL 28, 1997

DNF is officially announced. 3D Realms' Scott Miller and George Broussard license the *Quake II* engine and fund the game's development themselves. Marketing and publishing responsibilities are handed to GT Interactive.

MAY 28, 1998

The first trailer for *DNF* appears at E3 1998.

JUNE 1998

The *Quake II* engine is ditched for Epic Games' Unreal Engine. Realistically nearly all the work the developers had achieved up to that point has to be turfed.

JUNE 9, 2011

The saga ends. The game breaks street date and, for once, actually arrives earlier than expected.

MAY 24, 2011

It was announced that the game had finally gone gold after 14 years.

MARCH 23, 2011

One (final) delay is announced. The release of *DNF* is shifted to June 14 in North America and June 10 elsewhere.

JANUARY 21, 2011

It's announced that *DNF* will be released on May 3 in North America and May 6 elsewhere. A trailer is also released the same day.

► UPDATE

R you ready?

Draft guidelines for an R18+ rating released

In preparation for the July 21-22 Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) in Adelaide the Minister for Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor has released draft guidelines supporting the introduction of an R18+ classification for computer games.

"The Gillard Government wants to provide better guidance for parents and remove unsuitable material from children and teenagers," O'Connor said in an accompanying statement. "The introduction of an R18+ classification will help achieve that and will also bring Australia into line with comparable nations. This issue has been on the

table for many years, without the necessary progress to make a change."

The draft guidelines were first distributed to Classification Ministers at the last SCAG meeting in March and were distributed publicly to facilitate further community feedback. The guidelines contain few surprises but there appears to be a welcome distinction between MA15+ and R18+.

The impact of material classified MA 15+ should be no higher than strong. Strong themes, violence, drug use and nudity should be justified by context. Strong and realistic violence should not be very frequent but sexual violence may be implied, if justified

by context. Sexual activity, drug use and nudity must not be related to incentives. Strong coarse language may be used but aggressive language should be infrequent.

There are virtually no restrictions on the treatment of themes or on language. Violence is permitted except where it offends against general standards of morality and decency (sexual violence may be implied, if justified by context). Sexual activity may be realistically simulated. Drug use and nudity are permitted.

The criteria for being refused classification will remain basically unchanged at this point.



DECEMBER 1999

DNF remains largely unfinished. Infogrames buys GT Interactive.

DECEMBER 2000

Publishing rights to *DNF* are transferred over to Gathering of Developers.

1999

2008

2001

2011

MAY 16, 2001

Footage from *DNF* is released at E3 2001 and is the talk of the show. Gathering of Developers founder Doug Myres dies suddenly, prompting the remaining partners to negotiate a separation with the company. Take-Two takes over all operations, eventually folding it into the label 2K Games.

2003

Only 18 people at 3D Realms remain working on the game. Take-Two CEO Jeffrey Lapin reports that the game would not be out that year.

JANUARY 2006

Broussard reports during an interview that many of *DNF*'s elements had been finished: "We're just basically pulling it all together and trying to make it fun."

SEPTEMBER 3, 2010

The game is officially re-announced at the Penny Arcade Expo 2010 and is playable for the public. Gearbox announced that it has purchased the Duke Nukem intellectual property from 3D Realms. It's revealed despite the discontinuation of internal game development at 3D Realms, development of the game did not halt. Ex-employees continued development throughout 2009 from their homes. These employees would later become Triptych Games, an independent studio now based at Gearbox.

JUNE 11, 2010

It's announced that 3D Realms and Take-Two have settled the lawsuit and dismissed it with prejudice.

MAY 6, 2009

With funding all but exhausted development is suspended. 3D Realms lays off the *DNF* staff two days later. Take-Two files a lawsuit against 3D Realms over its failure to complete *DNF* a week later.

DECEMBER 19, 2007

The first teaser in more than six years is released.

OPS VAULT AUGUST

2002 ▶

We're really going back in time now. First hands-on with *Stuntman*, first news on *AFL Live 2003*, first glimpse of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*, huge features on *The Getaway* and *Devil May Cry 2* and official verdict for *V8 Supercar Race Driver*, *V-Rally 3*, the underrated *Prisoner of War* and, um, *Britney's Dance Beat*. This issue also featured one of our favourite PS2 ads of all time; the one with wrapped condoms shaped like PlayStation face buttons. Très classy.



2005 ▶

August 2005 wasn't too shabby. We got world-first looks at *GUN*, *Need for Speed Most Wanted* and a junket to snowy Sweden to see *Just Cause*. Interestingly, every game on the first page of our PS3 preview feature was either cancelled or has vanished from existence (*2 Days to Vegas* – we're looking at you). On a random note, Olympic champ Leisel Jones kicked former staffer Paul Frew's arse at *Tekken 5*. That was an odd night.



2010 ▶

12 months ago we we'd just arrived back from E3 2010 with all-new impressions of every game worth knowing about. Reviews were patchy though: *Alpha Protocol*, *Naughty Bear* and *Clash of the Titans*? Bleh. We looked into why good people like to act badly in videogames and printed the first instalment of our Forgotten Male Leads saga, a group of men decimated by Duke Nukem's return to the spotlight and Gabe Logan's rumoured recall to active duty.



TOP TEN

NPCs that you want to punch

The non-player character, or 'NPC', is often a stupid, annoying and utterly ubiquitous bastard. Where would any of us be without that unfunny AI sidekick to put up with, or a gaggle of generic soldiers who pretend to shoot enemies? Happy and in bliss is the answer. NPCs are the douchebane of our existence.



1

Sweary McTough Guy Rico

When it comes to tough guy character design, like the gruff brooding Solid Snake, less is often more. Some designers haven't cottoned onto this and head off to the other extreme: creating a loudmouthed AI buddy who peppers their speech with more MFs than a cougar swingers party. Try-hard wannabes are easy to spot and nobody likes them, Sweary.



4

Glorified GPS Guy The Watcher

Darksiders offered the perfect example of this with The Watcher. Glorified GPS Guy is bound to you and insists on telling you where to go, all the time, even if you didn't ask and prefer to figure it out for yourself. In the end, you'll be the one who wants to tell him where to go.



5

Cannon Fodder Fools Any shooter

These guys are the gaming equivalent of the background people in sitcoms who are paid to pretend to drink coffee and mime conversations. The difference is those TV extras can do their job convincingly and soldiers in videogames can't shoot for shite.



8

Pathetic Patrol Peds Sandbox titles

Before we start, "peds" doesn't mean what you think it does. It actually stands for "pedestrians". These NPCs specialise in mindless zombie street walking. No purpose. No destination. No sense to get out of the way when you feel like testing out both the turbo and the handbrake.



9

Announcer Asshat Street Fighter IV guy

"Which one of these will prove the old axiom today?" We've all heard that ditty said and we've all cringed. Announcers are the annoying coffee achievers of gaming, always excited, always screaming and never appreciated by the ears that must endure them.



2

Obvious Turncoat Man Lance Vance

There's nothing worse than having to ally yourself with an AI partner who is obviously being telegraphed as a future bad guy. Just once, we'd like the option to shoot them in the back, then and there, to save ourselves a pain in the arse boss fight later on.



3

Scripted Die Dude Any game

You know this dude. He's positioned a long way off looking anywhere but where he should be. Before you can get into melee range (to beat some sense into him) he'll be blown up or a hose-beast will whisk him away and spit back his skull. Oh, well. We hardly knew ye.



6

Comic Relief Character Daxter

Granted, Daxter has got better with every iteration of Jak & Daxter. But to begin with he was just an irritating parrot that many of us wanted to karate chop in the throat. Thankfully, as script writing has improved this NPC type is rightly going the way of the dodo.



7

Marcel Marceau Low budget titles

Not so much an NPC as it is a human looking object. Named after the famous mime, "Marcel Marceaus" are NPC statues that have an idle animation but do absolutely nothing when you shoot their TV, rob their house or even melee their junk. Lamest. Sauce. Ever.

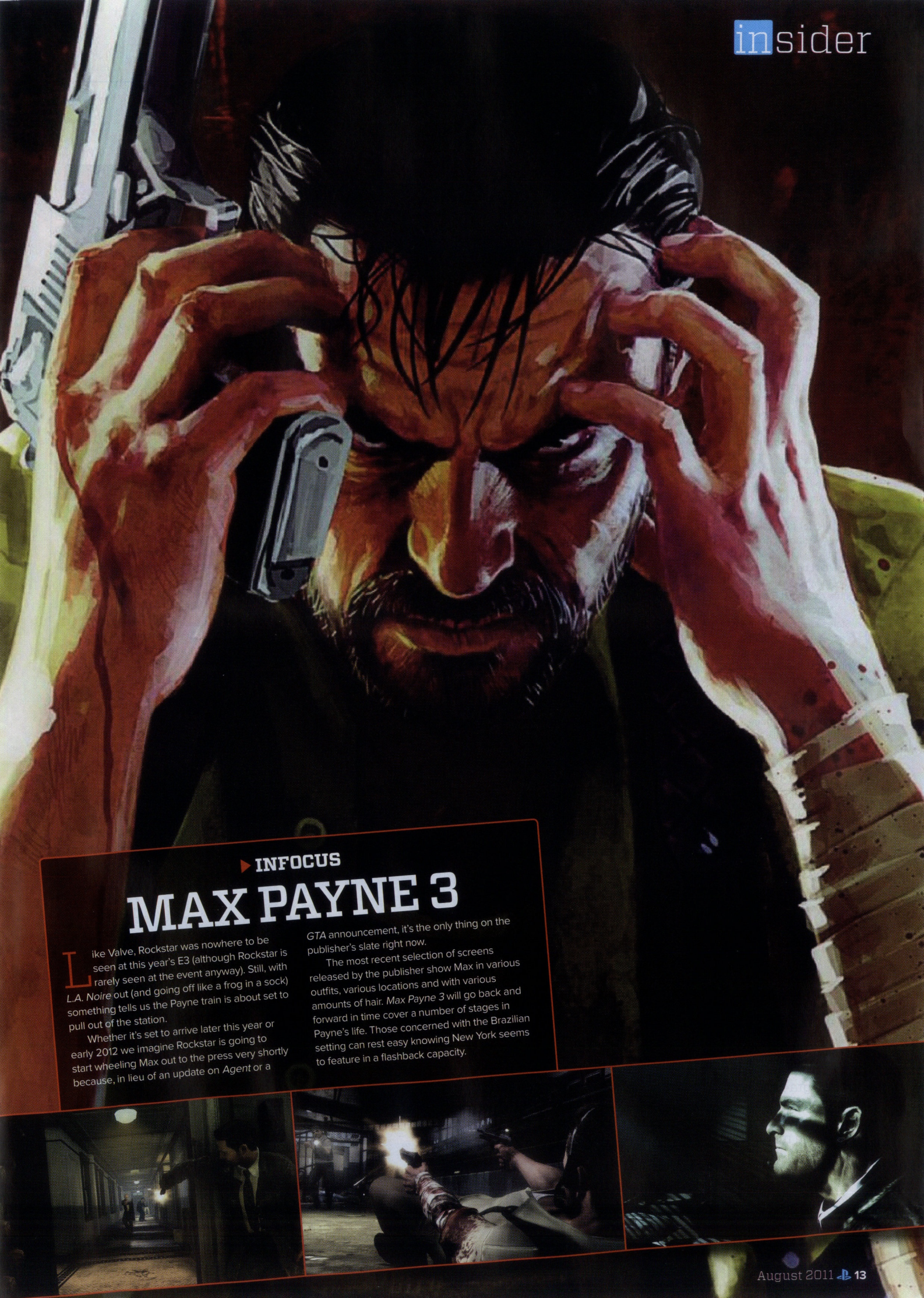


10

Non-stop Clap Nitwits

Driving games everywhere

Truth be told, racetracks are bloody boring to look at. They're looping miles of grey concrete and white safety barriers only occasionally broken up by candy-cane corner strips or the bumper of some jerk who gave you a brake test on the previous lap. Enter the perpetually cheering, thoroughly jaggy 2D nitwit. Pity these poor souls.



► INFOCUS

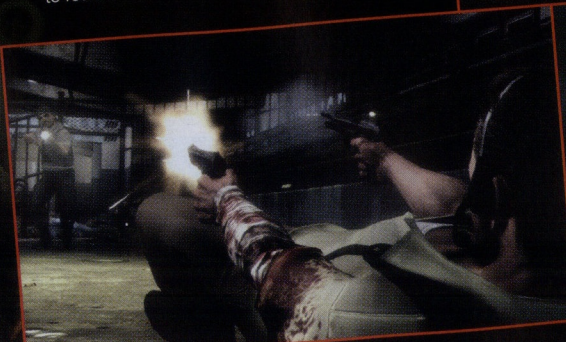
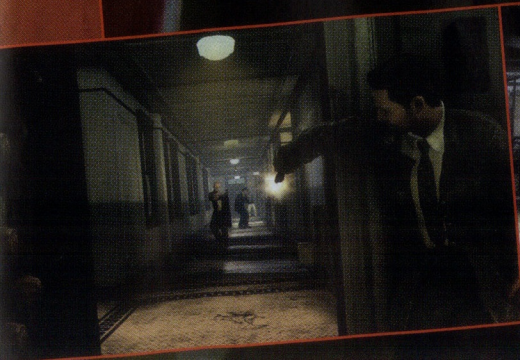
MAX PAYNE 3

Like Valve, Rockstar was nowhere to be seen at this year's E3 (although Rockstar is rarely seen at the event anyway). Still, with *L.A. Noire* out (and going off like a frog in a sock) something tells us the Payne train is about set to pull out of the station.

Whether it's set to arrive later this year or early 2012 we imagine Rockstar is going to start wheeling Max out to the press very shortly because, in lieu of an update on Agent or a

GTA announcement, it's the only thing on the publisher's slate right now.

The most recent selection of screens released by the publisher show Max in various outfits, various locations and with various amounts of hair. *Max Payne 3* will go back and forward in time cover a number of stages in Payne's life. Those concerned with the Brazilian setting can rest easy knowing New York seems to feature in a flashback capacity.



► IN REALITY

Inhaling on Mars and not dying. Do-able?

As seen in: Red Faction series

Get your ass to Mars. If there was one nugget of wisdom to be taken from the movie of *Total Recall* – other than the fact that a three-boobed hooker is too much for one person to handle – that was it.

Looking back, Arnie had it pretty easy; all he had to do was make the 'spock V' with his hand and slap it onto an alien machine to make it spit out a breathable atmosphere.

But what about us reality-based people? Can we find a way to do a reverse *Spaceballs* and get some air out into this coarse desert planet and turn it into our own personal space-Dubai?

The most obvious conundrum is actually getting out there and setting up shop. Scientists at the ESA (European Space Agency) hope to land humans on the red planet between 2030 and 2035.

Just for general interest sake, we should point out that those initial astronauts wouldn't be out there on a day trip. Not according to lunar astronaut Buzz Aldrin.

"Should the United States space program send a mission to Mars, those astronauts should be prepared to stay there. The time and expense required warrants more than a brief sojourn, they should not plan on coming back home."

So realistically, we're looking at 20-or-so years to send our one-way colonists. But then what?

Theories suggest that the Martian colony would be partially Earth-dependent for centuries. An initial colony of

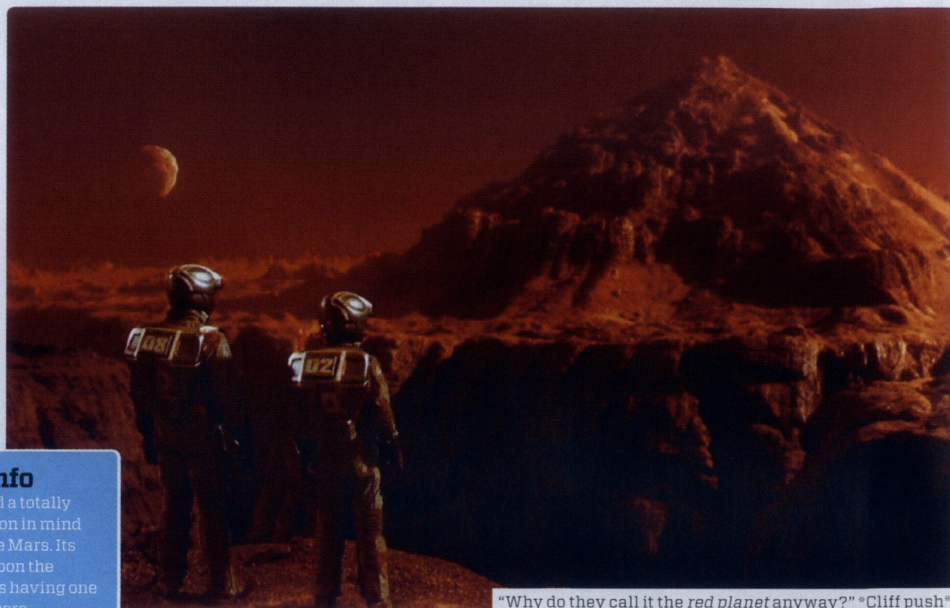
► More info

Total Recall had a totally different solution in mind for a breathable Mars. Its theory relied upon the concept of Mars having one big ice glacier core.

With the aid of a dirty big reactor you could melt this and that process would release enough oxygen for the whole planet (in a short enough time to prevent Arnie's eyeballs from bugging out of his head).

At the risk of making ourselves look like idiots in 20 years time, yeah, that's not gonna happen.

Forget the fact that Martian technology isn't waiting around to be jumpstarted. What if you did melt the core of the planet? How would the planet's crust remain in place and not collapse in a major seismological event if the core is suddenly not there? It'd be like poking a straw into a pie and sucking out all the meat.



"Why do they call it the red planet anyway?" "Cliff push"

four astronauts equipped with a small nuclear reactor and a couple of rover vehicles (because life would be boring without doughies) would make their own oxygen, grow food, and even initiate building projects using local raw materials.

Supplemented by food shipments, medical supplies and replacement gadgets from Earth, the colony would be indefinitely sustained.

At some point we would need to leave our subsurface, pressurised bio-dome habitats and terraform the planet into providing us with what we truly need: a breathable atmosphere and the means to start a mutant prostitution industry.

The longer-term work of terraforming Mars will require an initial phase of global warming to release atmosphere from the Martian regolith (read: that blanket of dust and dirt) and to create a water-cycle.

There would be three ways to achieve this global warming and each task would need to be done in tandem for the best results. Firstly you'd bust out orbital mirrors to heat the surface. Next

factories on the ground would have to pump halocarbons into the atmosphere. Lastly the seeding of bacteria would need to take place, which can metabolise water, nitrogen and carbon to produce ammonia and methane.

To aid in this last process the early settlers would step up and help out by releasing their own gases more frequently into the atmosphere of their new home. Sure, that'd be a drop-in-the-ocean effort, but the act has merit as a morale-boosting, symbolic 'we're all farting for a better future' kind of thing.

Do all that and yes, Mars' atmosphere can be bent to our mighty Earthen will.

All humankind needs to do then is avoid enslavement by the evil forces of mining conglomerates and underground swarms of aliens. That is of course if the surface Martian tripod machines don't zap us to death whilst their leader, Marvin, fires his Illudium Q-36 Explosive Space Modulator at Mother Earth.

Whatever happens our future will be bright.

► NUMBER CRUNCHING

20,000

◀ The amount, in Euros, that Namco Bandai Partners donated to the people of Christchurch on May 20

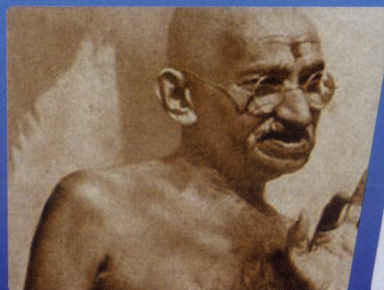
80,000

▲ The number of screenshots used by gta4.net to put together a Google Street View-style map



Separated at Birth!

NO. 28 *Street Fighter II*'s yoga enthusiast Dhalsim is a very thinly-veiled attempt at Mahatma Gandhi. With monkey skulls.



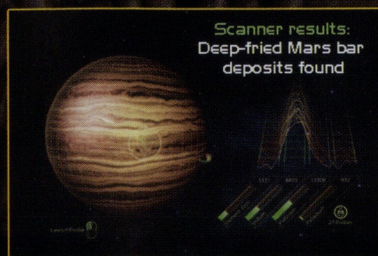
If you could fight any historic figure who would it be? We'd fight Gandhi. That's a good answer, but only if we meant the videogame equivalent of Gandhi – not the great historical pacifist – which we totally did. Just as *Fight Club*'s Tyler Durden's ultimate opponent would be Abe Lincoln (he's a big guy, big reach) Dhalsim is ours. In Tyler's words, skinny guys fight 'til they're burger. We don't know what that means but we want to find out.

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DLC MISSION

insane
GAMING SATIRE



Devour adventure aboard
the SSV Gourmandy



Search unknown space for
strange new edible elements



I'm Commander Shepard and this is
my favourite alien species on the Citadel



Around the World in PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



▲ JAIL TIME

COUPEVILLE, USA

Two women have been convicted for a September 2010 crash that killed Brian Wood of Vancouver-based Relic Entertainment, injured his pregnant wife and killed two passengers in the at-fault vehicle. Driver Jordyn Weichert was sentenced to eight years and passenger Samantha Bowling five years. Drugs were also found near the at-fault vehicle. Weichert was removing her sweater while driving and asked Bowling to steer when the vehicle lost control. Wood swerved to spare his wife the impact but was killed instantly. Since the crash Mrs. Woods gave birth to their daughter, Sierra Grace. Drive *safe*, people.



▲ CRACK DOWN BEGINS

BARCELONA, SPAIN

Three hackers were recently arrested by Spanish police in the cities of Barcelona, Almeria, and Valencia. It's claimed the hackers had targeted the PlayStation Store. Other targets included two Spanish banks, an Italian energy firm and government websites in Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Iran, Chile, Colombia and New Zealand. Hackers from the the Anonymous group briefly blocked the Spanish Police website in an apparent retaliation for the arrests. We're not certain antagonising police is the right way to get left alone to be honest. Seems kind of like poking an anthill to get the ants to stop biting you.



▲ CASUALTY OF WAR

NEW YORK CITY, USA

THQ is in the process of closing Kaos Studios and offering its employees the chance to continue working at THQ's Montreal-based studio. This, of course, would require people to up and leave their lives in one country and move to another so it's hard to imagine many of them are leaping at the chance. More than 100 people who worked on *Homefront* will be affected by the closure. THQ has said that this is a "strategic realignment within its internal studio structure." THQ intends to have its Montreal studio create 400 new jobs in the Quebec area. Talk of Kaos being closed has been going on for nearly a year.



▲ PODIUM FINISH

LE MANS, FRANCE

A former winner of Sony's annual *Gran Turismo* Academy competition has scored a podium finish at this year's Le Mans 24 Hours race. Yes, the real thing. Spaniard Lucas Ordoñez, who won the inaugural *GT Academy* back in 2008, managed second-in-class (LMP2) at the legendary endurance race with his Signatech Nissan teammates Franck Mailleux and Soheil Ayari. Three years ago Ordoñez was just an MBA student who played too much *Gran Turismo*. *GT Academy* is an annual pan-European promotion that pits the best *GT5* players against one another for the chance to train as a professional racing driver.



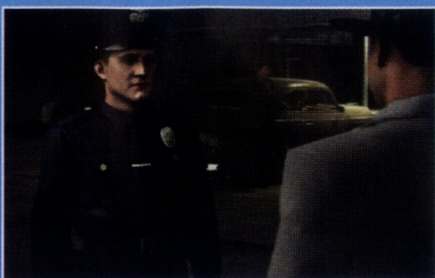
▲ NON-STOP GORE

LOS ANGELES, USA

Four CraveOnline and NOS Energy Drink team members have broken the Guinness World Record for "longest video games marathon playing a fighting game" by playing 32 hours of *Mortal Kombat*. The team shattered the record at the CraveOnline Non-Stop NOS Gaming Lounge outside the Los Angeles Convention Centre during the 2011 E3 Expo. Guinness World Record officials were on hand to monitor the team and presented them with an official certificate announcing the breaking of the world record. Hang on - they were each allowed 10 minute breaks every hour? Weak.

INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

EUROPE



- 1 **L.A. Noire** Rockstar
- 2 **DiRT 3** Codemasters
- 3 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 4 **LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean** Disney
- 5 **Sniper: Ghost Warrior** City Interactive

JAPAN



- 1 **Troy Musos** Tecmo Koei
- 2 **Nobunaga no Yabou: Tendou with Power-Up Kit** Tecmo Koei
- 3 **Demon's Souls** Sony
- 4 **inFAMOUS: Akumei Takaki Otoko** Sony
- 5 **World Soccer Winning Eleven 2011** Konami

USA



- 1 **L.A. Noire** Rockstar
- 2 **Mortal Kombat** Warner Bros.
- 3 **Hunted: The Demon's Forge** Bethesda
- 4 **Portal 2** Valve
- 5 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!



July 1

Australian International Motor Show

Start your engines and head on to the Australian International Motor Show at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition centre. It closes July 10. Check out motorshow.com.au for more info.



July 1

Hell on Wheels

The ACMI in Melbourne is hosting Hell on Wheels, a free outdoor exhibition showing footage of talented freaks on skateboards, BMXes and more. It runs until September 20. Go to acmi.net.au for more info.

July 6

State of Origin

The final State of Origin is on tonight, and you're either wildly waving your copy of *OPS* around as you celebrate or using it to mop up your tears.



July 7

Rango

Rango hits Blu-ray today, with Johnny Depp starring as a chameleon who accidentally becomes the sheriff of an outback town. This animated flick is ripper, whether you're a kid or a kid at heart.



July 14

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Harry Potter and Voldemort go toe-to-toe in the final (final) movie, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*. Only at the cinemas.



July 21

Call of Juarez: The Cartel

Call of Juarez: The Cartel takes players into the new Wild West, with three-player co-op, as you try to take out the Cartel. Spoiler: it has guns. That fire shot.



July 23

Rugby Union Tri-Nations

Sydney hosts Australia and South Africa in the Rugby union Tri-Nations campaign today. Go to rugby.com.au for more.



July 29

Captain America: The First Avenger

Barely a month goes by without a Marvel movie hitting the silver screen, and *Captain America: The First Avenger* lands today in a flash of stars and stripes at your local cinema.



July 29

Splendour in the Grass

Woodford in Queensland is again transformed as Splendour in the Grass, one of Australia's leading festivals, takes it over. There'll be three days of music but keep a lookout for sideshows.



Can't miss... The Adjustment Bureau JULY 1

The Adjustment Bureau is out today on Blu-ray, starring Matt Damon and Emily Blunt. You could describe this sci-fi thriller as 'Jason Bourne meets *Inception*', as Damon has to swiftly escape the blokes from the Bureau who are determined to change his fate.



Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

OUT NOW

Hunted: The Demon's Forge
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Red Faction: Armageddon
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ

inFAMOUS 2
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony

Shadows of the Damned
Genre: Action Distributor: EA

Duke Nukem Forever
Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K

Alice: Madness Returns
Genre: Action Distributor: EA

Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters
Genre: Action Distributor: Warner Bros.

Dungeon Siege III
Genre: Action/RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Cars 2
Genre: Racing Distributor: THQ

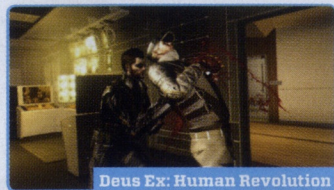
Transformers 3: Dark of the Moon
Genre: Action Distributor: Activision

JULY 2011

Captain America: Super Soldier
Genre: Action Distributor: SEGA Date: July 14

Call of Juarez: The Cartel
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC

AUGUST 2011



Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Deus Ex: Human Revolution
Genre: Shooter/RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: August 25

Warhammer 40K: Space Marine
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: TBC

SEPTEMBER 2011

Resistance 3
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony Date: September 6

RAGE
Genre: Adventure Distributor: AIE Date: September 15

Sonic Generations

Genre: Platformer Distributor: SEGA Date: September 28

FIFA 12

Genre: Sports Distributor: EA Date: TBC

NHL 12

Genre: Sports Distributor: EA Date: TBC

Madden NFL 12

Genre: Sports Distributor: EA Date: TBC

God of War Origins

Genre: Action-adventure Distributor: Sony Date: TBC

Ico and Shadow of the Colossus

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: TBC

Dead Island

Genre: Shooter Distributor: QVS Date: TBC

OCTOBER 2011

NBA 2K12

Genre: Sports Distributor: 2K Date: October 4

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

Genre: Flight Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: October 14

Batman: Arkham City

Genre: Action Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: October 19

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: October 19

Battlefield 3

Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA Date: October 25

Dark Souls

Genre: Action Distributor: TBA Date: TBC

Twisted Metal

Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony Date: TBC

NOVEMBER 2011

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Genre: Action-adventure Distributor: Sony Date: November 4

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision Date: November 8

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Genre: RPG Distributor: AIE Date: November 11



Need for Speed The Run

Need For Speed The Run

Genre: Racing Distributor: EA Date: November 13

Saints Row: The Third

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: November 15

WWE '12

Genre: Fighting Distributor: THQ Date: November 25

Assassin's Creed Revelations

Genre: Action-adventure Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBC

2011/2012

Bodycount

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC 2011

Rocksmith

Genre: Music Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2011

Just Dance 3

Genre: Dance Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2011

DmC

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2011

Silent Hill: Downpour

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBC 2011

The Lord of the Rings:

War in the North

Genre: RPG Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC 2011

Resident Evil:

Operation Raccoon City

Genre: Action Distributor: TBA Date: TBC 2011

SSX

Genre: Racing Distributor: Activision Date: January 2012

Mass Effect 3

Genre: Action RPG Distributor: EA Date: March 6 2012

Tomb Raider

Genre: Action-adventure Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

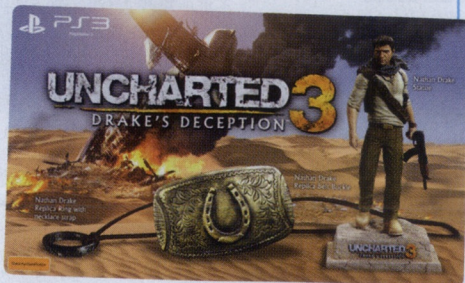
► Limited Edition

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Set to be the best PS3 game this year, *Uncharted 3* will take you from a derelict chateau in France all the way to the merciless Arabian Desert.

Explorer Edition:

Includes Nathan Drake figurine, Nathan Drake replica ring with necklace strap, Nathan Replica belt buckle and an antique style replica traveller's box. Also includes a PSN voucher to download a multiplayer skin and weapon, a multiplayer 'Upper Cut Taunt', a cash multiplier and a 'Special Edition Decals Pack' to customise your avatar's accessories.



EB GAMES

\$208
Estimated dispatch date:
November 3

JB HIFI

\$209
Estimated dispatch date:
Late 2011

GAME

\$209.95
Estimated dispatch date:
2011

Agent
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** TBC

Spec Ops: The Line
Genre: Action **Distributor:** 2K **Date:** TBC 2012

Metal Gear Solid: Rising
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** TBC 2012

The Last Guardian
Genre: Adventure **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** TBC 2012

Max Payne 3
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** TBC 2012



Hitman Absolution
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC 2012

Prey 2
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA **Date:** TBC 2012

Final Fantasy XIII-2
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2012

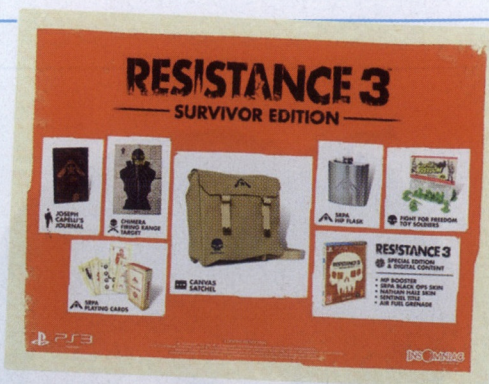
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2012

Ridge Racer Unbounded
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC 2012

Dust 514
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA **Date:** TBC 2012

BioShock Infinite
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** 2K **Date:** TBC 2012

Brothers in Arms: Furious 4
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2012



► Pre-order Resistance 3

America is lost. Four years after the epic conclusion of *Resistance 2*, dishonourably discharged Sentinel Joseph Capelli is in hiding from the invading Chimera menace with a pocket of survivors, including his new wife and young son. But when Dr. Fyodor Malikov arrives with a desperate plan to cripple the Chimera, Capelli is forced into action.

Survivor Edition:

Includes Steelbook packaging, "Vinyl Effect" BD disc, DLC (Multiplayer booster, SRPA Black Ops skin, Infected Nathan Hale skin, special multiplayer title – "Sentinel" – exclusive to pre-order customers, Air Fuel grenade), Joseph Capelli's journal, SRPA hip flask, canvas satchel, life-size Chimera firing range target, "Fight for Freedom" toy soldiers and SRPA playing cards.

EB GAMES \$188
 Estimated dispatch date: September 8

JB HIFI TBC
 Estimated dispatch date: September 8

GAME \$179.95
 Estimated dispatch date: 2011

Starhawk
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** TBC 2012



Overstrike
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** EA **Date:** TBC 2012

The Darkness II
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** 2K **Date:** TBC 2012

Prototype 2
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Activision **Date:** TBC 2012



► Exclusive Assassin's Creed Revelations

In *Assassin's Creed Revelations*, master assassin Ezio Auditore walks in the footsteps of his legendary ancestor, Altaïr, on a journey of discovery and revelation. The journey will take Ezio to Constantinople, the heart of the Ottoman Empire, where a growing army of Templars threatens to destabilise the region. In addition to this final chapter in Ezio's story the acclaimed online multiplayer experience returns.

Animus Edition (exclusive to EB Games):

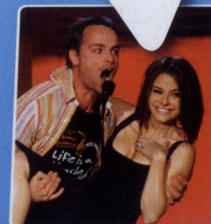
Includes the Animus box (break the Assassin seal to unveil its content), in-depth *Assassin's Creed* encyclopedia, *Embers*: the animated short movie plus the *Assassin's Creed* soundtrack. In-game content includes Vlad the Impaler's personal blade, capacity upgrades for bullets, bombs and crossbow arrows, two additional multiplayer characters and the Armour of Brutus from *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*.

EB GAMES \$138
 Estimated dispatch date: TBC November



In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"It is still alive and we are very far [into] development so we can't go back now... We are targeting the

next generation of consoles"

Series creator **Michel Ancel** says *Beyond Good & Evil 2* will skip this generation of consoles due to his work on *Rayman Origins*.

"1hr in. Moriarty was right re: games as kitsch. Derivative, uninspired, narcissistic. Nothing original to say, & said badly. #LANoire"



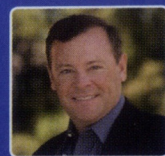
Clint Hocking, creative director for *Far Cry 2* and *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*, is less than impressed with *L.A. Noire*, taking to Twitter to express his disdain. Each to his own, but we do wonder if he'd be happy with us reviewing his next game after playing it for just one hour?



"We wanted to come in and revolutionise *Final Fantasy*, which is exactly what they need... The latest version sucks of course"

Ulf and Bo Andersson, co-founders of shuttered Swedish studio Grin, on Square Enix. Nearly two years ago now Grin had been working on a new *Final Fantasy* game titled 'Fortress' for Square Enix. The Anderssons insist Square Enix turned on the idea of a Nordic style *Final Fantasy*.

"Nothing pleases the Internet like bad news. So, press outlets: you're welcome"



Jack Tretton, chief executive of Sony Computer Entertainment of America, kicks off Sony's E3 2011 press conference with a formal apology to consumers regarding the PSN cyber attack and a good-humoured quip at the media.



FOOLS RUSSIAN

It's time for Dad's Army to retire...

This year's E3 was quite the spectacle. A cornucopia of new software was revealed for the PlayStation Vita; I'm particularly keen to try out the latest game from Jonathan 'Everyday Shooter' Mak.

But beyond that? So many outrageous gambits; so many desperate rolls of the dice. Nintendo went all in on a console design that it prays will keep it one step ahead of Apple, by attaching an enormous iPad to its console. Microsoft doubled down on the Kinect and, in true bureaucratic style, jumped on a trend a good year after it first went viral. It's hard to imagine how the 360 could make for a more enjoyable game of *Minecraft*. And Activision and EA decided to condemn the *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* franchises to oblivion. How? By making Russians the baddies. Again.

So I'm exaggerating. But yes, the Russians. Wedged between permafrost and the Huns, for much of the 20th Century their frigid, distant land was the world's biggest exporter of terrorism, aggression, and toxic ideology. The perfect villains for movies and video games, they were the true successors to the Nazis. Even as late as the 1980s, Australians lived in mortal fear that a World War could kick off at any moment, and that our state capitals would be vaporised by atomic weapons. Then the Soviet Union collapsed and we all realised that Russia was an economically backwards basket case. Today, the Russians aren't up to conquering anybody.

These developers may still have *Red Dawn* posters on their garage walls but when the youth of today think of Russia they're more likely to


picture Vladimir Putin image macros, fishing without a shirt on or hovering over a freshly-tranquillised tiger nursing a dart gun. Russian baddies have all the cultural relevance of a '70s greatest hits album. Yet they live on because, while we have more contemporary foes (at last count, the US is mired in four different war-zones), it's just not politically correct to talk about them.

Ergo, any war game set in the present day must exist in a kind of fruity, unrealistic parallel universe.

Concordantly, sensible devs are giving up on the present day entirely. With the new *XCOM*, not only has 2K wound back the clock to a *Mad Men*, early '60s setting, it's even skimping on recognisably humanoid enemies; many of the alien aggressors are simple abstract shapes.

Who knows, maybe 2K Marin can actually make a dodecahedron scary. I'll never look at my 12-sided dice the same way again.

West and Zampella, the ousted founders of Infinity Ward, are taking a more sensible middle road. While details of their next shooter are a tad thin on the ground, the very fact they've gone for a sci-fi setting speaks volumes. Set your game in the present day, and make, say, New Zealand the enemy, and you invite attack. You get angry letters from the ambassador, snooty commentators reminding us that not ALL Kiwis are terrorists, etc. But the Thargoids don't exist, so the sky's the limit. They can slaver and drool, and murder and maim, and accrue so many sins that slaying them becomes not only fun, but righteous.

Maybe *MW3* will be the best-selling shooter of all time. And maybe, just maybe, gaming has bet on Red one time too many... 

"Russian baddies have all the cultural relevance of a '70s greatest hits album"



OPINION
James Cottee

James Cottee is a veteran videogame journalist. He'd probably blend in well in Russia; he likes vodka and owns several robust coats.

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FREEDOM OF SUPPOSED CHOICE

Haven't got around to the *Dragon Age* series yet? You might like to move on. The following rant contains spoilers. Lots of them...

Ever since *Baldur's Gate* BioWare has prided itself on the drastic freedom of choice its RPGs revel in torturing you with. At least, that *used* to be the case. Choice? What choice. Nowadays it's like Victorian parliament in here.

Dragon Age, I'm eyeing you off.

Origins is serious business. It forces you into a state of constant decision-making paranoia for fear you might abruptly end up beheading Wynne because she's been a closet Maker fan this whole time and you, you just *had* to take a leak on Andraste's ashes. The Reaver specialisation was totally... not worth it, but you see what I mean. Your every move delivered game-shaking consequences.

Ha, tough tittles, Alistair. See you in the sequel as a pitiful, wandering drunkard.

But wait. As the final, tumultuous battle looms, the faint whiff of narrative fascism can be smelt. Morrigan demands you bed her one last time. Sure! But, er, why? Because in doing so she will go on to birth an Old God and – bonus – you'll survive the fatalistic showdown with the Arch Demon as its residual evil heads for her womb instead. Thing is, I thought that was an awful idea. Sounded like the end of the universe to me, and I have enough problems (keeping the fuzz off these Dalish corn-rows is a full-time job). So I knocked her back, and she left in a wolfish hurry. I then dutifully gave my life to save everyone else's poorly-rendered asses from the Fifth Blight; a bitterly ironic, dramatic end for a snarky elf stolen from his clan and pressed into Grey Warden service. What a great story.


Or I thought it was. The *Awakening* expansion is where things really start to unravel, and I quote the manual: "If you choose a character that died during the climax of *Dragon Age: Origins*, you play *Awakening* as if the character had lived."

What. Why isn't there even the option to continue my dead-guy game, but with the new Orlesian Warden in his place?

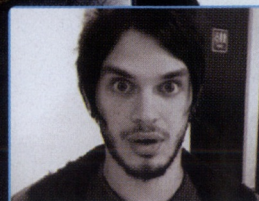
Now absolutely none of my ongoing saga makes sense (and even less so in *Dragon Age II*, with some people referring to my Warden as nobly deceased and some as if he still lives, a ruthless ruler with great hair). Summarily, the *Witch Hunt* DLC feels utterly redundant, and it's heavily implied that Morrigan is supposed to be carting my demon spawn around inside her. But that was a choice I made – the wrong one, evidently. Why offer it?

Enter *Dragon Age II*, the destroyer. You meaning nothing to it. Your actions in the first game and its addendums are barely felt via passing remembrance; 'Import game' my Mabari's balls. Throw Isabela to the Arishok's wolves or keep her on, it makes no difference – she'll wind up sailing the seven seas either way. Why? Obviously, she has a part to play in *Dragon Age III*. Your decision regarding her fate is moot – but not as moot as the ho-hum finale. Don't help Anders load the Chantry with boom-boom? He does it on the sly regardless because it needs to happen or said finale can't even begin.

Despite a superbly tense climax that suggests a mutable future, whether you side with the mages or the templars makes no difference whatsoever when it absolutely could and should have. Orsino will always lose his shit, Meredith will always lose double her shit, and the last song remains the same: the mages of Thedas get real mad.

A slow clap for the arbitrary, if you please. You get *Mass Effect 3* to redeem yourselves. 

"Enter *Dragon Age II* the destroyer. You mean nothing to it"



OPINION
Toby McCasker

Toby McCasker believes we're victims of sedition on an open sea. Sink, swim, go down with the ship – just use your freedom of choice.

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MO' MONEY

Selling cheats is already like holding your game content to ransom – why stop there?

Carter Pinsky, videogame industry bigwig, was still wondering whether the squirrel he hit on the way to work this morning wasn't visible in his rear vision mirror because it had remained trapped beneath his Camaro or it had limped away before he spotted it.

He was also dealing with two further mutually exclusive possibilities: that the squirrel hadn't existed at all or that it wasn't a squirrel in the first place. At least some of his neighbours owned cats, and some also had small children. Carter's high-powered executive lifestyle was both taxing and distracting. Also, he did a lot of drugs.

Nonetheless he was smiling from ear to ear as he slid down the halls towards the office of fellow corporate kingpin Baz Buchwald. Baz's long-suffering secretary Evelyn was nowhere to be seen. Carter didn't mind; he didn't find her particularly attractive. He burst through the doors and oozed inside.

"Carter!" shouted Buchwald, his head buried in a deep bowl of horse tranquillisers. He looked like a greyhound chowing down fistfuls of kibble.

Carter hadn't been into Baz's office since the fire. The place had been completely redecorated with steel furniture. Baz reclined in what appeared to be a high-speed collision between a medieval throne and the world's most expensive swivel seat. The whole thing was made of polished metal. It looked like the T-1000 pretending to be a chair.

"What do you think of the new digs, Carter?" he asked. "Evelyn says it looks like a morgue. She said it's fitting because this is where good ideas come to die."

Carter snorted.

"What would she know?" he shot back.

"People don't want good ideas. Good ideas are a bad idea."

"That's what I told her," said Baz. "So what brings you here, Carter? More ridiculous

concepts for videogames I'll absolutely hate?"

"No, none of that," laughed Carter. "Just a way for us to extort our customers for even more money."

"You're making love to my ears, Carter – give it to me baby."

Carter stood up for his big reveal.

"When I was a kid," he began,

"I used to steal things from weaker children – all kinds of stuff; food, inhalers, whatever – and make them buy it back off me again."

Baz was nodding.

"If a kid wanted to eat or survive his next asthma attack he had to pay up," Carter said.

"Right on," said Baz, throwing his arm out for an obligatory high five. "What are you thinking Carter? Hit me. It's probably mostly the tranquillisers but I'm tingling Carter, *tingling!*"

Carter decided to come straight out and say it.

"We sell the endings to our games... as DLC," he said smugly.

"If customers want to finish a game they have to pay us again for the privilege."

Baz was obviously struck by the insane brilliance of the concept. A trickle of sweat ran down the side of his face, but it could have been a tear. *A tear of joy.*

"Remarkable, Carter!" boomed Baz. His hairy hand slammed down on the desk with the kind of force football players reserve for rapping teammates on the back after a big hit. Carter could hear bones shattering in it but registered no change for the worse in Baz's emotional state.

"Regular DLC is for chumps!" Baz went on, taking the words from Carter's mouth. "Make this happen, Carter. Make this happen and we'll be rolling in so much dough we'll be able to put a down payment on Maui."

"Are we taking a trip?" asked Carter.

"Nope", Baz grinned. "We're selling all our games twice now Carter. We're gonna buy the whole island!" 🏝️

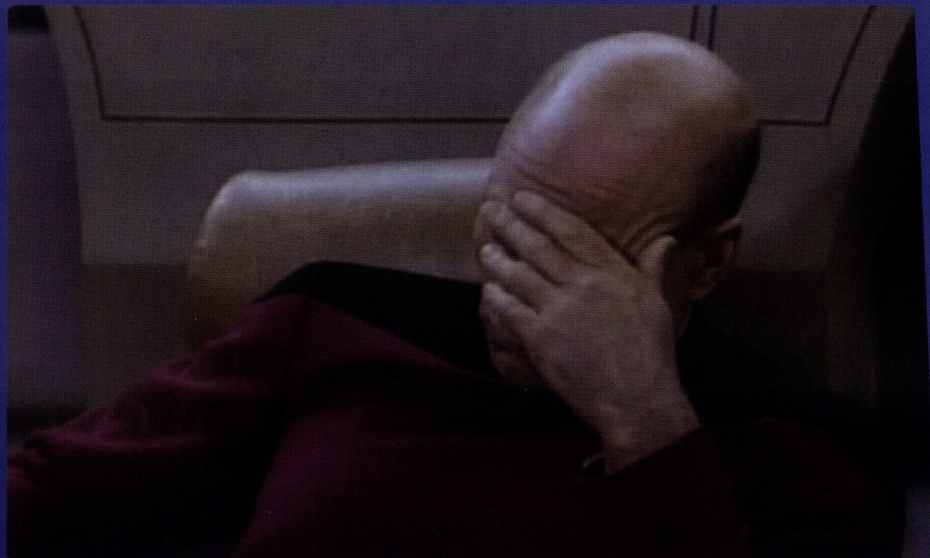
"I used to steal things from weaker children – all kinds of stuff"



OPINION
Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist who sincerely hopes there aren't any publishers thinking about taking the above joke seriously.

inbox



▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH

SOLOIST

HI OPS,
I'm a regular subscriber of and look forward to receiving it each month.

The reason for my writing to you is that I have noticed a trend that is really starting to annoy me! I recently bought and finished playing *L.A. Noire* and must I first say WOW, what an awesome game and big thumbs up to Team Bondi! It was amazing to play such a prominent game made here in my own home country. But back to the subject.

Now, while I was playing it I had heaps of mates that could see on their consoles that I was playing this game. I got heaps of people asking me if this game was any good or worth buying but I was horrified and tried to do my best to convince them that this was definitely a game worth getting. But no luck.

This isn't the only game where this has been the case. I've have quite a few people that have turned down *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, *inFAMOUS*, the *God of War* series and the list

goes on! This has got me thinking! What happened

to just playing great single-player games where the gripping story and amazing worlds completely captures you and make you thirsty for more? Don't get me wrong, I highly enjoy playing multiplayer games and play them often too. But there was a time when there wasn't any multiplayer! As a matter of fact that's where most of us older gamers all started out!

It makes me shudder to think that if this trend keeps up maybe the single-player experience is a dying breed? I certainly hope that the developers don't jump on the money train and just go with what the loudest fans like. That's also why I applaud Rockstar for producing such a game like *L.A. Noire* despite being famous for making awesome multiplayer gameplay like in *Red Dead Redemption*.

So therefore I urge all gamers that haven't, please give the single-player games a second chance. It's not always about shooting or slaying the other player. It is one of the most awesome experiences to play a game with a great story on your own through to the end. It gives you a great sense of accomplishment and I promise you wont regret it!

Marco Kappel, via email

Damn straight. Give that man a prize.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A COPY OF:

inFAMOUS 2

Love single-player games? Here's a humdinger of one.

SATISFIED BUT UNQUENCHED

Dear OPS,

I've got a little scenario for you: It's 12:30am and you're playing an open-world, free roam. You realise two things. One, it's getting late and two, your chances of waking up early for work tomorrow morning have decreased dramatically. With that in mind, you decide to complete the mission that you're on and then let autosave work its magic.

Afterwards, just as you're about to turn off your system, you see a helpless civilian taking a stroll along the footpath. You also realise (at the same time) that you have a sniper rifle and/or rocket launcher. You think to yourself: game's already saved, whatever I do now is practically non-existent. So you scope out said civilian and blow the bejesus out of him and all the other civilians (who by now have started piss bolting in the opposite direction). Why? Just because.

Then many grenades and machinegun rounds later, you find yourself surrounded by police, shooting for your life in an all out riot, all whilst your screen slowly starts to lose its colour. Then you get that shot, the one that cues the slow motion and the one that signals the end of your brave and honourable defiance. You then quickly turn off your system before autosave ruins your "good guy" stats and head off to bed (at about 1:30am) gaining the best of both worlds.

I call this the post-save syndrome. I've been going through it my entire life and whilst playing *L.A. Noire*, I've only just realised it. Recently, I had one of those 'late night' moments and it happened just as Cole Phelps' life began to spiral out of control. Now without spoiling the plot, the part I'm referring to is the reason why Cole transitions from Vice to Arson. Phelps was obviously physically and mentally distraught and in turn, I felt his pain. So just after the game autosaved, I was ready to head into bed when I felt the need to let out all our frustration on anything and everything. But after searching for something to kill or maim, I realised that there was no gun in sight, no punch/grapple button, nothing. And the worst part of all was that there were helpless civilians everywhere! I felt the NEED to be reckless. I owed it to Phelps, but it was something I simply couldn't do.

I guess the good guy persona is something Team Bondi worked hard to achieve and I commend them greatly on the absolute AAA masterpiece that they have created. But as I lay in bed that night, I just couldn't help feeling that my thirst went unquenched as I gave up on trying to play the bad guy for a change.

Abraham Chalhoub, via email

Man, *L.A. Noire* sure is a hot topic this month. While it's true that Team Bondi shied away from allowing mayhem in the game, it does let you act the fool. Take the Public Menace trophy for example, it tasks you with causing \$47,000 worth of damage in a case (pro tip: go grab a firetruck from the local fire station and do it with that – those candy red behemoths respawn). It's also quite possible to run down civvies in your car, it's just a little harder to do. And like our grandma used to say: the harder you have to work for that roadkill, the more satisfied you are when you finally pull it off and get off scott free from the po-lice.

PARENTHOOD

Hi guys,

I've been keenly following your coverage on the ridiculous classification system in Australia and congratulate you on your balanced and reasoned view.

I've recently written in discussing the absurdity of refusing games such as *Mortal Kombat* whilst other games get pigeonholed into an MA15+ rating,

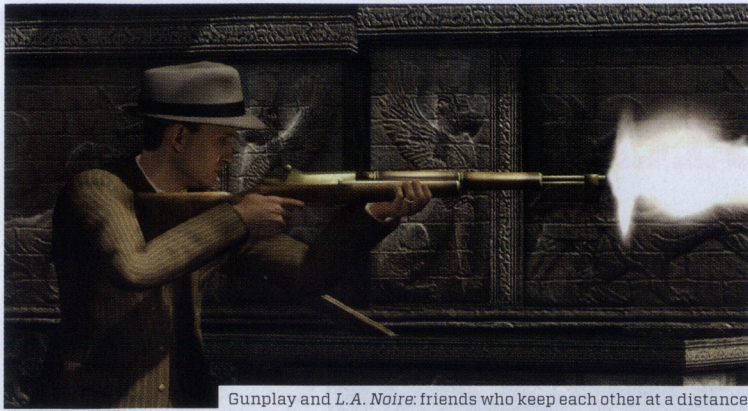
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Gunplay and *L.A. Noire*: friends who keep each other at a distance

“Seriously? Five-star, top marks for *L.A. Noire*? It's like the worst game ever”

and others such as Nintendo's *Dead or Alive: Dimensions* and the Wii's *We Dare* inexplicably receive a PG rating.

It seems we are possibly heading in the right direction though with the classification system devised some 17 years ago heading towards an overhaul at the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General meeting in July.

Draft guidelines for the classification of computer games were released on the Federal Government Classification website.

It will remain to be seen whether this amendment can be accomplished with the requirement of a unanimous agreement from all states and territories to change the current system, however again well done on the reporting and helping spread the word for change and the need for a more appropriate system for informing adults of their choices.

Daniel Spiteri, via email

Cheers Daniel. Minister for Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor's supporting statements regarding the draft guidelines can be found on page 10. We also hope commonsense will prevail come July. An improved system will better reflect the very principles of the Classification Code itself. Under the Code, classification decisions are to give effect, as far as possible, these two important principles. Adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want and minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them. If the R18+ rating maintains these principles regarding film classification it'll do the same regarding videogame classification. Regardless of the political, religious or social persuasions of those who oppose repairing our outdated classification system, they can't have it both ways.

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

Hey OPS,

Seriously? Five-star, top marks for *L.A. Noire*? It's like the worst game ever. It's way too linear and I hate how there's no freedom to cause mayhem. It looks awesome, sure, but this game is a textbook example of a game that pretentious critics love and that the average consumer hates.

It's actually a sad indictment on professional videogame reviewers that this game can score such high reviews when there are clearly lots of people who feel the game is boring and not worthy of being purchased. If the game had multiplayer MAYBE I'd keep playing (games without multiplayer should be half price, surely? **Jacob West**, via email

If the game had multiplayer? Yeah, and if a frog had wings, he wouldn't bump his arse when he hops. Not all games need multiplayer to get by. Have you played *God of War III*, *Mass Effect 2*, *Uncharted* or *Fallout 3*, or did the lack of multiplayer turn you off? We're not saying, say, co-op play or something akin to cops 'n robbers style shenanigans wouldn't work in the *L.A. Noire* universe but you're reaching to say *L.A. Noire* is at some sort of disadvantage because it doesn't have multiplayer.

No mayhem? You're a cop. Being a cop is what you signed on for; you seem to be missing the point. If you want mayhem Rockstar already made your game. Half a dozen times already, actually. Worst game ever? You really don't play enough games. We recommend *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust* for PS3 with a side of *Charlie's Angels* for PS2.

We weren't aware that the average consumer hated *L.A. Noire*. Could you point us towards your research, or are

you just referring to the few dozen joyless sacks haunting the negative end of *L.A. Noire*'s Metacritic user-score, some of whom you stole the material for this letter from? With the game being snapped up all over the country (and the fact it became the fastest selling new IP in the UK ever) we'd say your understanding of the average consumer is underdeveloped.

We're not saying you *have* to like *L.A. Noire*. Nobody *has* to like anything. We believe that you don't like it, and that's cool. You just need to understand your personal tastes are not the single barometer against which all games should be measured. You're just going to have to deal with the fact a large number of people feel it's excellent.

QUESTIONING THE MONARCHY

Howdy OPS,

Hopefully this email gets to you in time. It's a day after launch and I have just finished *Duke Nukem Forever*. I've never had this many mixed emotions about a game before.

First off, I love the humour. Aside from *Bulletstorm* there's no current era FPS that can match it for laughs. I also had fun stomping enemies with the shrink-ray: how have we not had shrink-ray weapons since 1997?! They're rad.

On the other hand it is dingo ugly to look at and a few standard FPS features are missing (ironsights, hello?).

But while I think the game was overpriced I genuinely had fun with it. Here's hoping Duke returns and that his brand of comedy saves us from a future of super-serious shooters.

Steve Jones, via email

It's a bit of a smashed crab all right. We also agree that The King needs to return though.

Cuttings

► Scope scoop

I just realised something, *MW3* is the first FPS to include the Hybrid sight (it's a combination of a holographic and an ACOG). Well, there is a plus!

Michael Bonvino, via Facebook

Good spot. Some people notice hybrid cars, us gamers notice hybrid *killing machines*.

► Online annoyance

BF3 looks awesome! And the good thing will be all the ill children will stick to their beloved *COD*, so we won't have to put up with their annoying voices and idiocy.

Joel Phillips, via Facebook

Old idiom updated thanks

to the advent of online multiplayer: "Out of the mouth of babes [come the sort of words that'll send your nanna into cardiac arrest]."

► It's all about perspective

[*Ghost Recon: Future Soldier*] may be the only time I will accept a third-person game! (Yes, that means I haven't played *Uncharted*. And no, that doesn't mean I haven't played any Rockstar games, they are the only other exception to the rule!)

Micaheal Bovino, via Facebook

We're fascinated, but confused.

Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on facebook

▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



John-Paul Murphy
R.U.S.E.

"This is **HIGHLY** underrated"



Becca Irving
inFAMOUS 2

"Better than the first one, I miss the old voice actor"



Adrian Emerson
L.A. Noire

"Gladly supporting Australian developers"



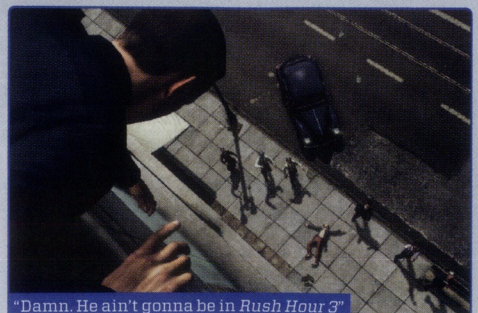
Griff Butters
inFAMOUS 2

"The first one was awesome and this is too"

Caption This ►

You put the words to the screen. Simple.

Jimmy Rocky Faló chimes in with a random but well-timed quip lifted from the *Rush Hour 2* gag-reel



"Damn. He ain't gonna be in *Rush Hour 3*"

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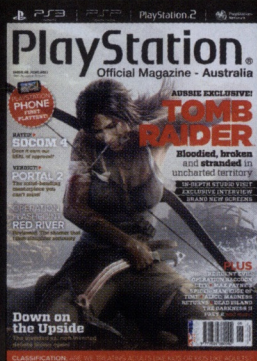
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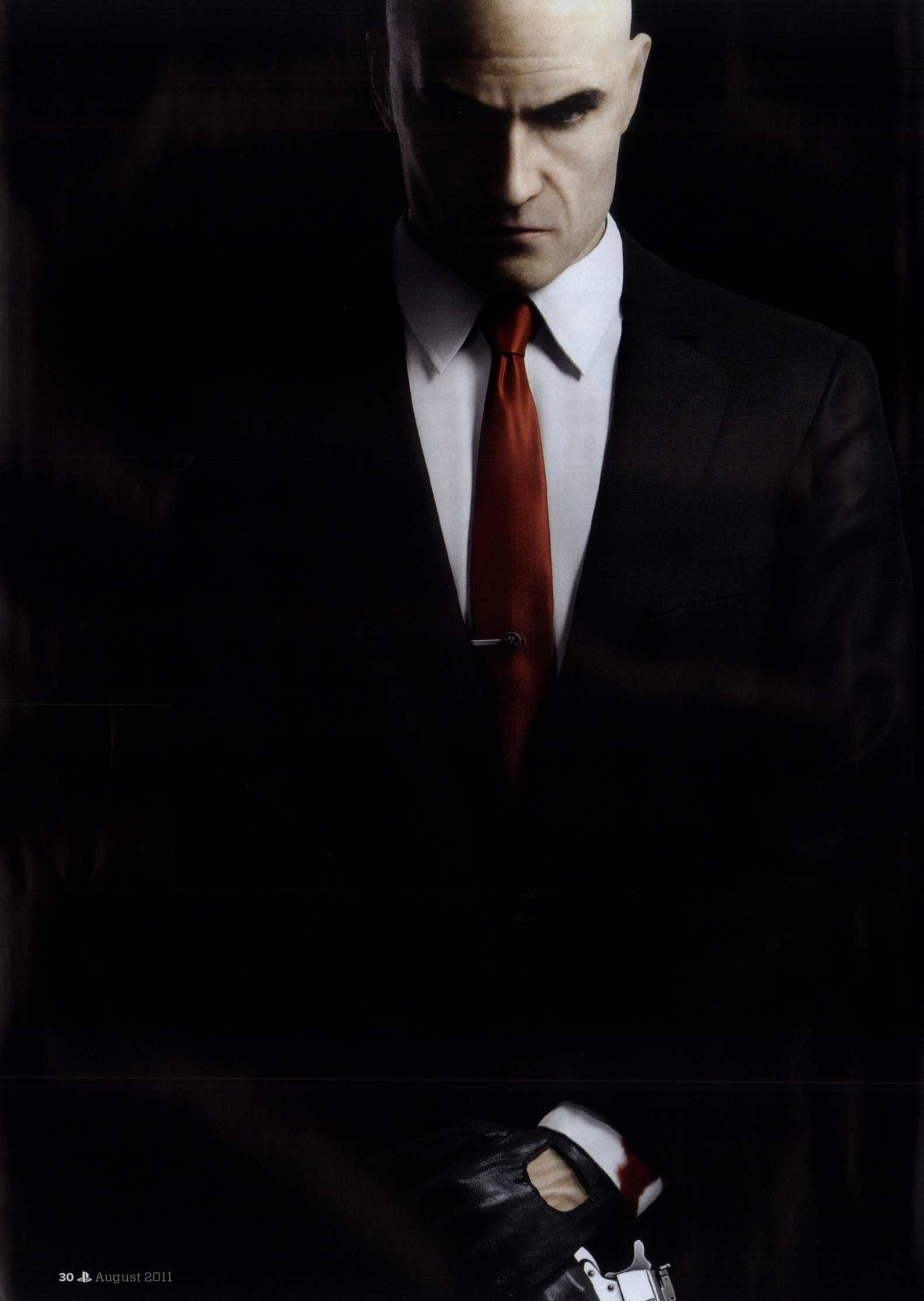
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M1080PS



2011

WORDS: PAUL TAYLOR

**SET YOUR
WALLETS
TO STUNNED**

**ON
THE
INSIDE**

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3

DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD OUT: NOVEMBER 2011

4ou've all seen the trailers and you've all soaked in the hype before. *Call of Duty* is nothing if not exciting in the sense that it's full of tense, action-packed moments running at 60 frames per second. We're all waiting to see if (or even by how much) it will surpass the success of the last instalment.

Activision knows what works and it's looking to make that bigger, better, and more explosive. The newly formed Sledgehammer team (co-founded by Michael Condrey and Glen Schofield, two guys from the *Dead Space* studio Visceral Games) is bringing a level of expertise in its collaboration with Infinity Ward, and over the last two years the team has been busy crafting.

They've listened to the feedback and want to build a blockbuster: new modes, a blistering single-player campaign and multiplayer that's going to be the choice of shooter fans all over the world. We only witnessed single-player footage, and the gameplay looks very familiar – but still pulse-raising – as a team breaches a submarine from under the water then smashes through a harbour to board a waiting chopper. We bet you're in this purely for the gunplay rather than the depth of the characters but the adventure is global now with the entire Western world under attack.

We did get hands on with the bolstered Spec Ops part of the title, in a new mode called Survival. Waves of enemies come at you and your co-op partner and you earn cash for surviving the waves and for efficient, smart kills. Between rounds you'll have to replenish supplies, buy turrets, call in friendly NPCs to give you a hand. It felt very tight and very stressful, and there's an XP system that ranks you up in a similar way to adversarial multiplayer.

Of course, it all ties into Elite so you can track your performance and compare it with your mates. You'll also be able to play individual missions that utilise environments from the main game, as well as new ones.

As for *Battlefield 3*? Sledgehammer wouldn't be drawn except that they thrive on competition. As a brand, *Modern Warfare* competes with film, music, and other genres for your time and coin. Along with Infinity Ward they're a driven team that's determined to make an outstanding product, and that's something we can all look forward to playing.

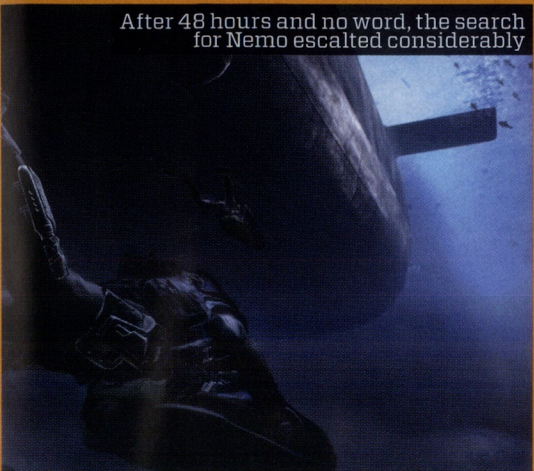
The shotgun: it does what it says it does

Watch for the Mr. Stay Puft cameo. It'll melt your heart

In the future, dancing the Macarena was a competitive blood sport



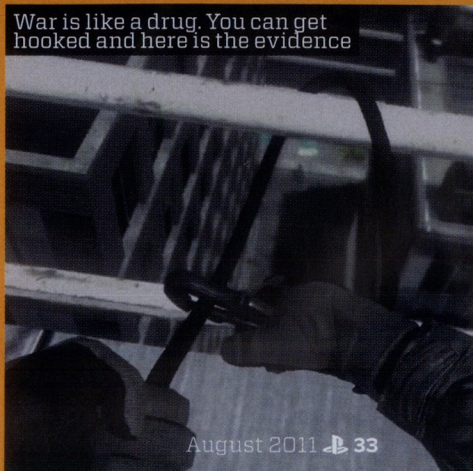
After 48 hours and no word, the search for Nemo escalated considerably

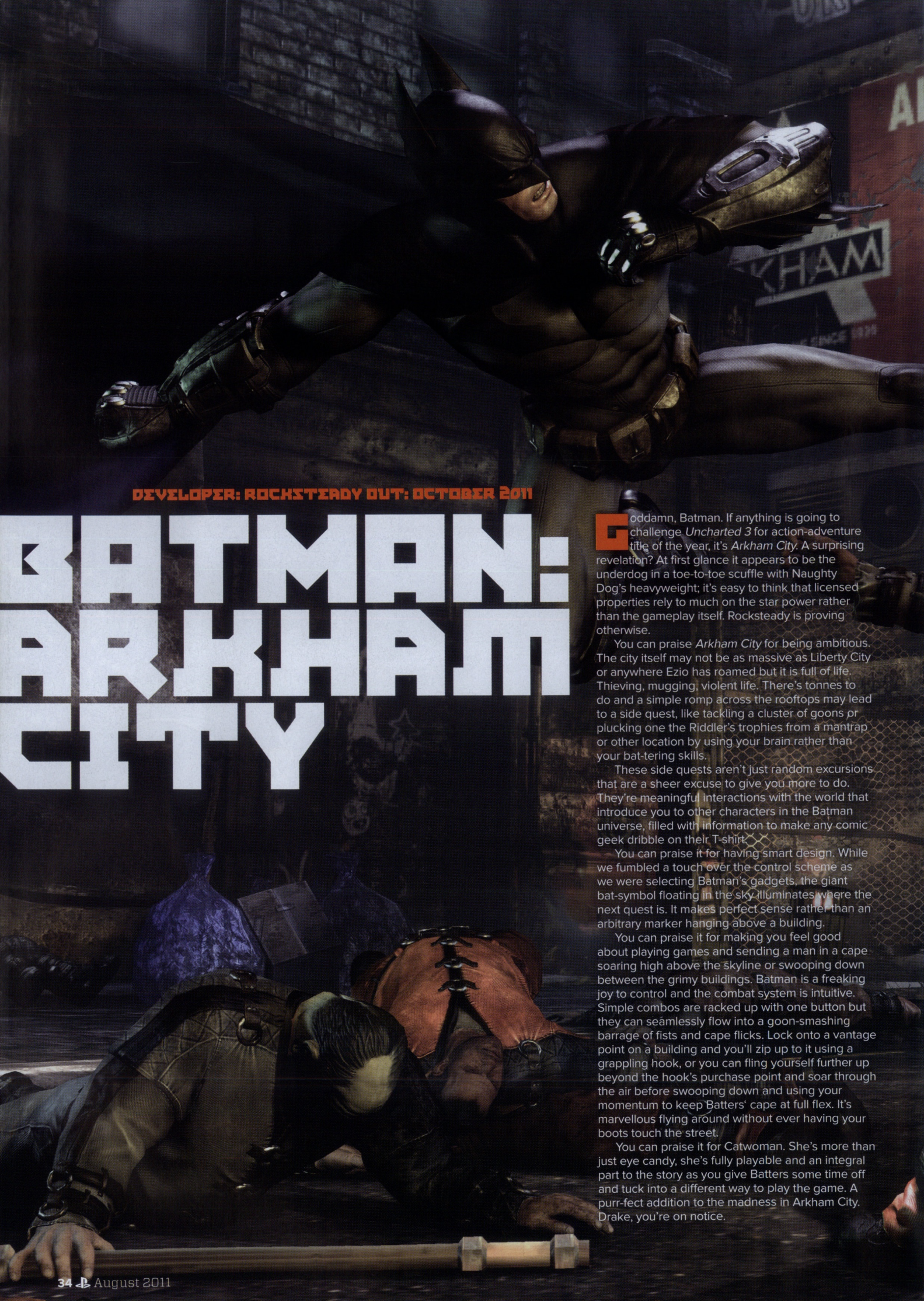


"Remember back to your training! It's not the sort of magazine you read"



War is like a drug. You can get hooked and here is the evidence





DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY OUT: OCTOBER 2011

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

Goddamn, Batman. If anything is going to challenge *Uncharted 3* for action-adventure title of the year, it's *Arkham City*. A surprising revelation? At first glance it appears to be the underdog in a toe-to-toe scuffle with Naughty Dog's heavyweight; it's easy to think that licensed properties rely too much on the star power rather than the gameplay itself. Rocksteady is proving otherwise.

You can praise *Arkham City* for being ambitious. The city itself may not be as massive as Liberty City or anywhere Ezio has roamed but it is full of life. Thieving, mugging, violent life. There's tonnes to do and a simple romp across the rooftops may lead to a side quest, like tackling a cluster of goons or plucking one of the Riddler's trophies from a mantrap or other location by using your brain rather than your bat-tering skills.

These side quests aren't just random excursions that are a sheer excuse to give you more to do. They're meaningful interactions with the world that introduce you to other characters in the Batman universe, filled with information to make any comic geek dribble on their T-shirt.

You can praise it for having smart design. While we fumbled a touch over the control scheme as we were selecting Batman's gadgets, the giant bat-symbol floating in the sky illuminates where the next quest is. It makes perfect sense rather than an arbitrary marker hanging above a building.

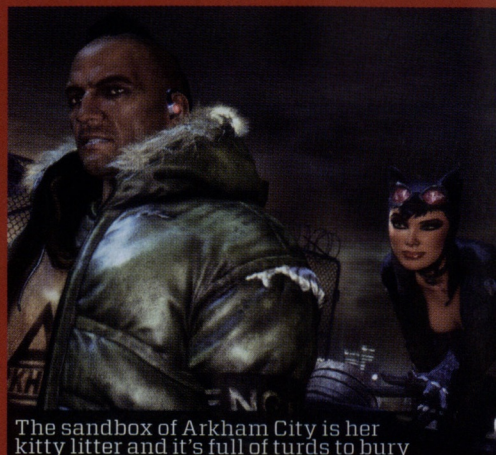
You can praise it for making you feel good about playing games and sending a man in a cape soaring high above the skyline or swooping down between the grimy buildings. Batman is a freaking joy to control and the combat system is intuitive. Simple combos are racked up with one button but they can seamlessly flow into a goon-smashing barrage of fists and cape flicks. Lock onto a vantage point on a building and you'll zip up to it using a grappling hook, or you can fling yourself further up beyond the hook's purchase point and soar through the air before swooping down and using your momentum to keep Batters' cape at full flex. It's marvellous flying around without ever having your boots touch the street.

You can praise it for Catwoman. She's more than just eye candy, she's fully playable and an integral part to the story as you give Batters some time off and tuck into a different way to play the game. A purr-fect addition to the madness in *Arkham City*. Drake, you're on notice.

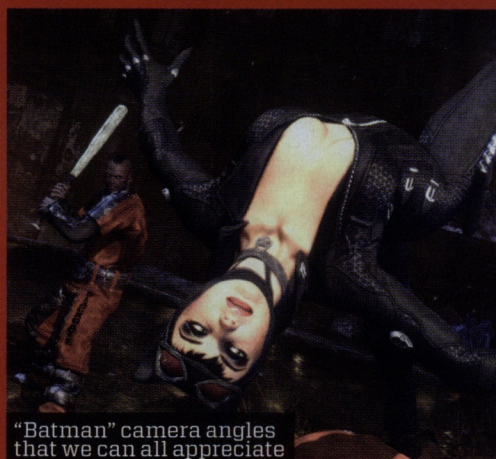


Σ3 2011

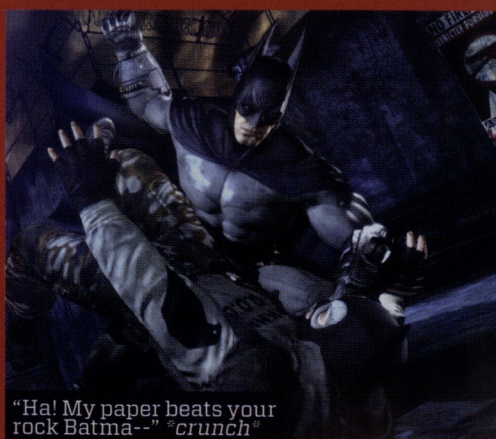
Catwoman: she's no pussy, but she is



The sandbox of Arkham City is her kitty litter and it's full of turds to bury



"Batman" camera angles that we can all appreciate

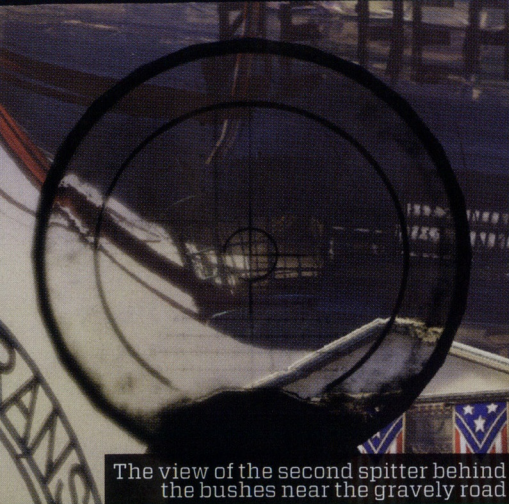


"Ha! My paper beats your rock Batma--" **crunch**

Grab your partner dosey-doh, find a wall, release and throw...



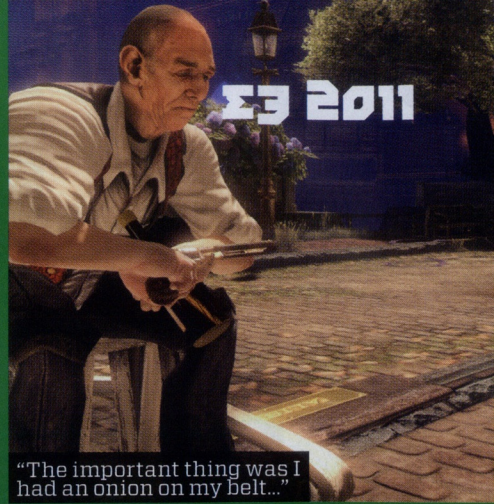




The view of the second spitter behind the bushes near the gravelly road



"This is for raggin' on my hipster threads" *I regret nothing...*



"The important thing was I had an onion on my belt..."

BIO SHOCK INFINITE

DEVELOPER: IRRATIONAL GAMES OUT: TBC 2012

We think it's a smart move that the latest from Irrational Games doesn't have a '3' where it says 'infinite' in the title. The team has broken away from the series roots, leaving Rapture in the murky submarine depths while *Infinite* soars high above the clouds.

Don't fret though, as this still feels like a *BioShock* title. It's full of mystery and the truth of your situation has to be clawed at, likely while you're launching a flock of birds from your fingertips and rocketing through the air on a gut-wrenching skyhook system.

Early gameplay footage suggests there's much more cohesion in how your character develops (compared to the may-as-well-be-nameless Jack from *BioShock*), as well as creating relationships with the people you interact with. It all boils down to the storyline and it's one that could fill this page. Booker De Witt, an ex-Pinkerton Agent, is onboard a battle-ready flying airship, the *Columbia*. He's looking for a girl called Elizabeth who was kidnapped 15 years ago and taken to the fortress that rides amongst the clouds.

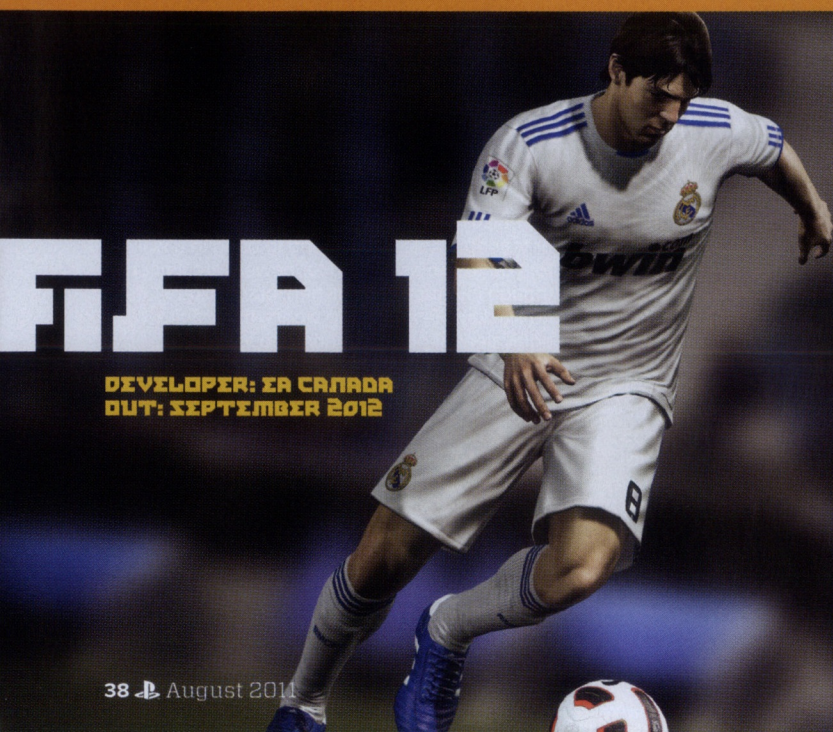
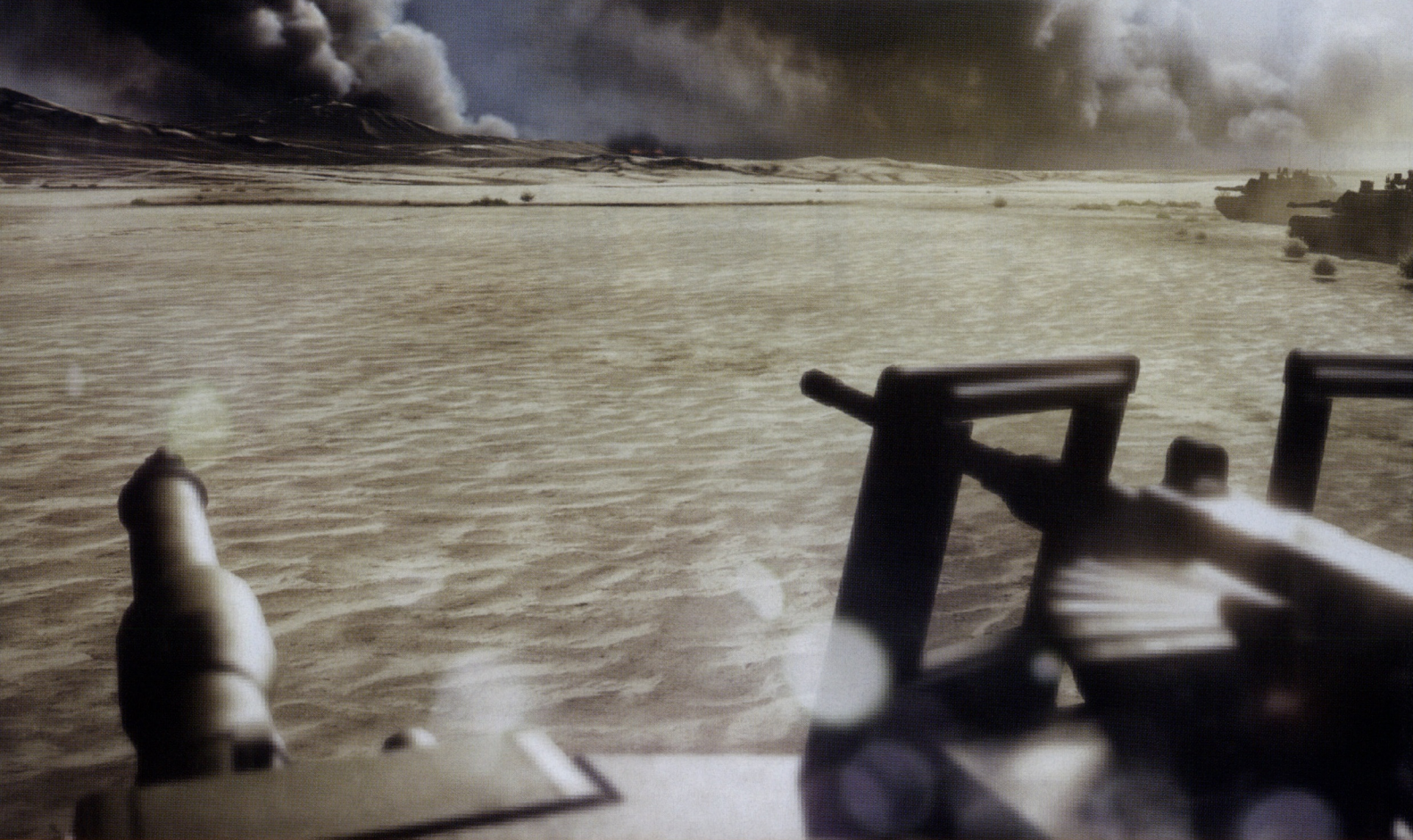
Columbia's ripping itself apart as various factions fight each other for control, and fighting

power with power is one way that these freaky citizens will get themselves killed. In the past we've seen Big Daddy-like golems roaming the streets, but your main antagonist is Songbird, a huge mechanical looking bird/man hybrid. His entrance is marked by world-crumbling vibrations and a screech of light and sound ripped straight from the guts of the Devil. He's the creature that captured Elizabeth and his appearance is one you need to be fearful of.

When you're with Elizabeth she can use 'tears' in the world: for instance, making a turret exist to help fend off violent protestors, or tearing a hole in the world to bring in a wall for you to use as cover. Her powers are limited though (overuse may kill her), but Booker's no slacker. He can equip vigors, the *Infinite* equivalent of plasmids, and also leaps onto the skyhook system to traverse through the surprisingly open-looking world.

It's a stunning game to watch, with bright, high-contrast colours as the canvas for a lot of bloodshed. That skyhook system will send your stomachs into loops as you can detach yourself mid-ride and leap onto another rail or onto a surface below. This deserves some serious attention.

DATA FIELD



FIFA 12

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
OUT: SEPTEMBER 2012

Do yourself a favour. Sell your copy of *FIFA 11* right now. It's about to be worthless in a few months time.

Why? *FIFA 12* has enough features to make an impressive PowerPoint presentation: precision dribbling, tactical defending, the Impact Engine, Football Club. All these things are going together to make the biggest sports title in the world even more in depth, offering as big a step up as 09 was to 10, and 10 to 11.

It's a game that offers nuance, accurately representing the sport it portrays in incredible ways. We ran through its list of improvements last month but getting hands on with it we can feel how it's changed.

You can absolutely get away with playing this like you did *FIFA 11*, but train your left thumb to ease off going full tilt and you'll feel how damned refined playing football can be. There's more excitement to be had in holding on to the ball, roping a defender in and making him do all the work before blasting through a gap and hoofing it up field.

FIFA 12 also marries the real world to its digital life with Football Club, an online service that tracks real games going on around the world and weaves them into the stats of your favourite club in-game. Life sapping? You bet. Rewarding? Undeniably.

DEVELOPER: DICE OUT: OCTOBER 2011

The arms race is on and the rivalry between this and the biggest shooter franchise in the world is getting increasingly hostile.

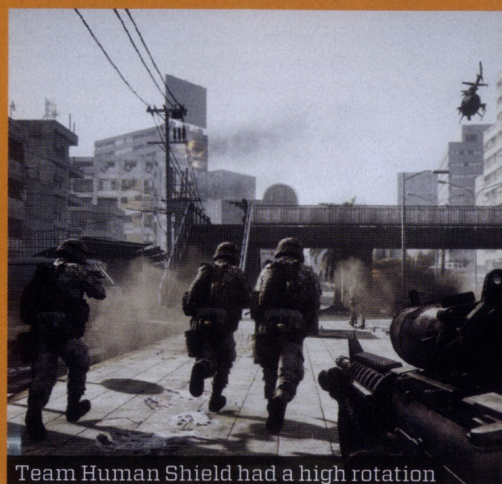
Battlefield 3 is all about immersion when you look at the single-player part of the game, and very cunning tactics in multiplayer. The four main classes in multiplayer have been tweaked, so that the assault guys are also medics, while the heavy gunner and his bipod can lay suppressing fire that makes an enemy's viewpoint bleed at the edges. He might not be going for the kill but all that blasting does more than physically discourage someone from standing up and running out, it also shuts down the opponent's view of the battle raging in front of them. On a

smaller scale, the engineer and his underslung torchlight can blind someone temporarily.

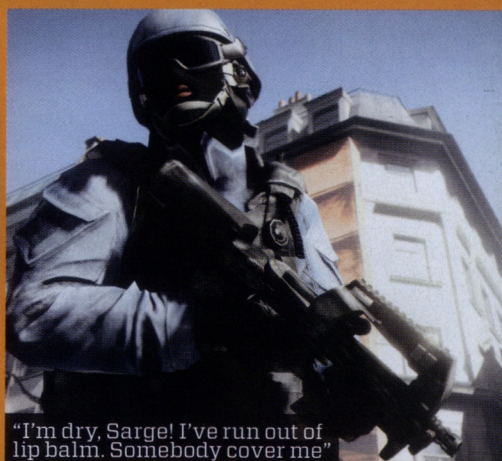
Plus, it's ridiculously good looking. Games this year have stepped up a notch when it comes to visuals and the team's Frostbite 2 engine is all about dynamic lighting and a killer framerate, so you can see the flare of that rocket along a tunnel wall before it blasts into your face. We're most excited about it letting you chip away at the façade of a building, as your bullets nibble away at concrete, wood and support structures to make skirmishes alter on the fly. While we didn't see any full-scale destruction we'd be surprised to not witness it in October, when *Battlefield 3* launches the first salvo in the war for your time and bandwidth.



"It's quiet. Too qu--" *brrrnt*
"Damn it, Johnson. Cease fire"



Team Human Shield had a high rotation



"I'm dry, Sarge! I've run out of lip balm. Somebody cover me"



DEVELOPER: BETHESDA OUT: NOVEMBER 2011

THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

You need to know right now that *Skyrim* is big. It's so big it has its own gravitational mass that will suck you in as you wave goodbye to your life, your job, and your family, before you – ironically – become entwined in its sheer freedom.

You can play through the story if you want in this RPG from the team who made *Morrowind*. There will be dozens of hours of gameplay there for those who want a beginning and end, or you can go exploring and scratch below the surface. Look towards the horizon and – as *Oblivion* fans will know – if you can see a mountain in the distance you can go there and climb it, searching for the 150-plus hand crafted dungeons.

Play it how you want. Be a warrior, then a mage. Dual wield swords and dip them in spider's venom to poison anyone who tastes your metal, or map the same magic to each of your hands to make a spell twice as powerful and double the fun.

It's not all roses though. The menu system for picking through your magic breaks up the action, but you'll be thankful for a time out to gather your thoughts when a dragon lands in a patch of grass next to you. While the devs didn't outright confirm it, we're expecting to ride one of these leathery beasts in early November.

4ou either couldn't care less about the *Final Fantasy* series or you're insanely curious to know how the series has evolved. *XIII* funnelled players down a series of (very pretty) tunnels and didn't offer the usual scope of freedom and attention-destroying mini games until late in the piece.

We saw a mere slice of this direct sequel that (the PR reps say) aims to "marry cinematic beauty with interactive gameplay." To that we say, what the hell is gameplay if it isn't interactive?

There's absolutely no doubt that lots of love and attention has been poured into making this a graphical marvel and we're glad to see that you can take multiple paths through the world. Forks in the road lead to unique encounters and, surprisingly (for *Final Fantasy*), you can now jump over walls to find items that have been squirreled away.

The enemy encounter system's been tweaked too, giving you more of a chance to escape from a brawl and to also get a pre-emptive strike on whatever abomination is gunning for your turn-based throat. Fights with bigger foes are also blessed (or cursed) with quick-time events that could make or break a scuffle, and it's possible to recruit monsters into your party to bulk up your ranks.

So, there's more variety – but whether it's what you wanted or expected is something else. Us? We can't help but be pleased for the new direction. Plus, there's an insanely cute flying cat, the Moogles, which becomes a bow and arrow. Hey, we report the news, not make it.

FINAL FANTASY XIII-2

DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX OUT: TBC 2012

FEAR CRY 3

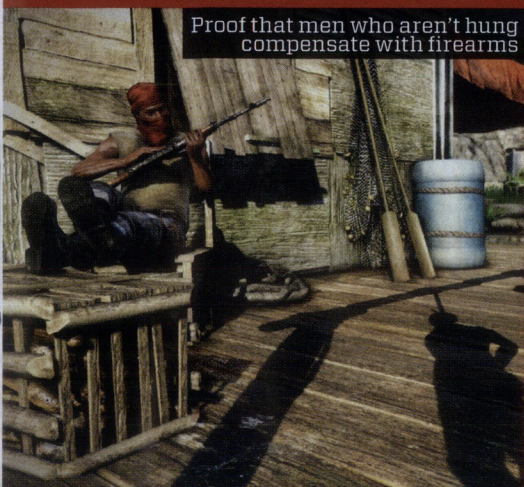
Σ3 2011

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL OUT: TBC 2012

Fear Cry 2 did an excellent job of presenting an 'adult' game. It dealt with important themes in a war torn country, making the player deal with moral choices, and spun a gripping narrative. The team that's crafting part 3 were inspired by the success of the open world set in Africa, and want to take the elements that worked well and make something new. The demo we saw was one of the most shocking of the show.

You're not in Africa anymore. Instead you're on the edge of the Pacific and Indian Oceans in a highly saturated world of colour, but one that's filled with drugs, piracy and abhorrent human abuse. Taking charge of a bloke called Jason Brody you need to find your missing girlfriend and get the hell off the island. We know little about him, except that he has a camera and is pretty savvy with a gun.

Brody's given a voice as well, and the combat goes beyond just shooting and simple rifle-butt-to-the-head melee. Grab a knife, stick a guy then swiftly throw the knife at another attacker. It comes off as effortlessly slick. Also, craziest villain ever.



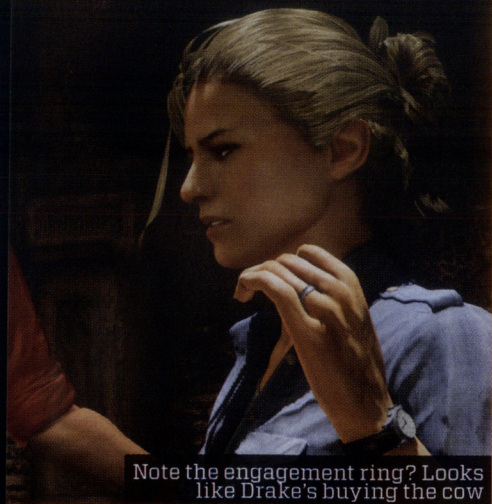
Proof that men who aren't hung compensate with firearms



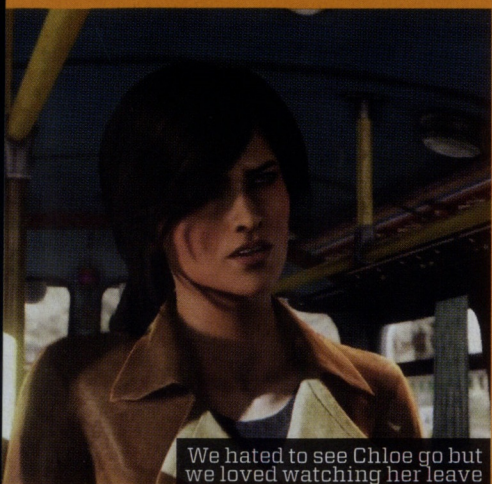
Say, "Hello and don't hurt me" to Band-Aids' new poster boy



Musical Chairs with only one chair always ended badly



Note the engagement ring? Looks like Drake's buying the cow



We hated to see Chloe go but we loved watching her leave



"Ah yes, I see you have already sampled our British pub food"

DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG OUT: NOVEMBER 2011

UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION

The biggest compliment we can give *Uncharted 3* is that it'll make *Uncharted 2* look like a valiant second effort whilst simultaneously making the series a benchmark on how to make games. Naughty Dog has proven itself to be the developer to beat when it comes to crafting action-adventure games, and this third part in the series simply adds more evidence of that.

Naughty Dog showed off a portion of the single-player campaign where Drake needs to escape from an ocean liner. Lobbing a grenade at a bunch of enemies accidentally rips open a section of the ship's hull and the vessel starts to roll over. Cue perspective change as Drake

battles to keep his footing on a listing ship which then completes a full 90 degrees.

We got to play a section of the co-op mode, a bespoke component that ties into the overall theme of *Uncharted 3*. It's best described as 'competitive co-op' as you need to work together to not only ward off the bandits but also complete puzzles – Sully raises a column out of the ground while Drake pinches the statue from within a recess underneath – and try to score as many points as possible.

The next six or so months are big ones for Drake, with the PS Vita title, *Golden Abyss*, pushing *Uncharted's* dominance into the portable realm. It's going to be a hell of a ride.

F1 2011

DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS OUT: SEPTEMBER 2011

You can't call Codemasters 'lazy'. Last year it wrapped up the world of Formula One, a highly technical motorsport with drivers who are celebrities, into an impressive and accessible package that dominated the sales chart. The easy solution for 2011 would be to update the roster and the tracks.

Forget about that. New rule changes, including the Drag Reduction System, as well as the use of KERS are a boon to the game, allowing you to pull away on the straights and adding to the excitement of piloting a multi-million dollar machine in exotic locations.

Take a mate with you on a ride in either splitscreen or online, and race a whole season together. While you're going to be working together you need to remember that only one of you will be champion.

Codies have overhauled the graphics too, plunging you more into the role of race car driver from the moment your wheels burn away from the start line to being back in the trailer. We can't wait for the flag to drop on this.





SIX was one of THE PlayStation 2 launch titles, and it's a franchise that's in gamers' hearts and long-forgotten, dusty cupboards. Revamping it for 2011 means tapping into what made it so revered, whilst giving it a big dose of modernity: an open world (or the illusion of it), great visuals and fry-your-eyeballs gameplay. We really like that the HUD during the bigger 'deadly descents' is transplanted onto the side of the mountain itself.

It's not a game that does 'normal'. Why just carve up a mountain when you can race through the centre of a volcano? Flares might denote your finish line, but you *finish* the race by jumping off a lip and hooking

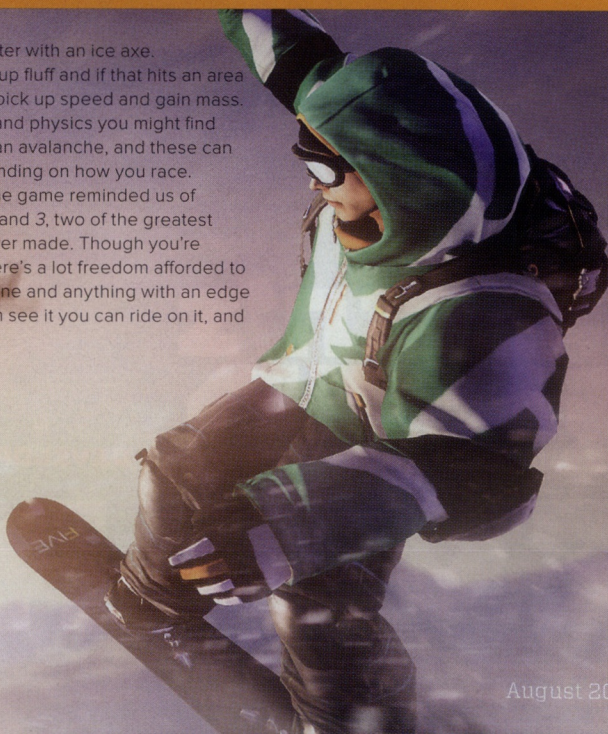
onto the skid of a helicopter with an ice axe.

Big hits on snow kick up fluff and if that hits an area of instability it's going to pick up speed and gain mass. Depending on your luck and physics you might find yourself in the middle of an avalanche, and these can happen at any time depending on how you race.

Hands-on time with the game reminded us of the spirit of *Tony Hawk 2* and *3*, two of the greatest extreme sports games ever made. Though you're going in one direction there's a lot of freedom afforded to how you take the racing line and anything with an edge can be grinded. If you can see it you can ride on it, and that's snow joke.

SIX

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA OUT: JANUARY 2012

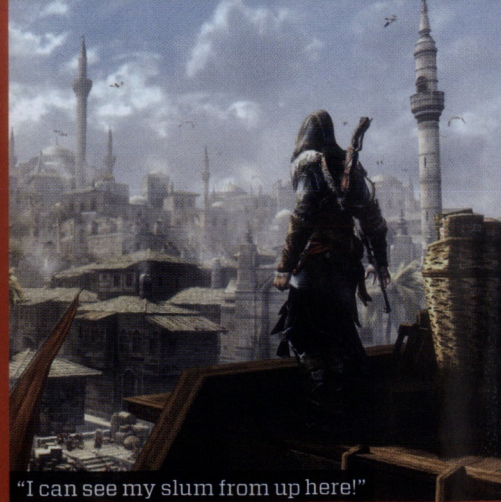




This weapon actually used to exist



Siamese twins. How do they get dressed?



"I can see my slum from up here!"



Ild and new members of the Creed cross ancestral paths in Ezio's final chapter as the master assassin searches for answers behind the legend of Altaïr. The single player sequence shown off at E3 was filled with more explosives than you'd expect a stealthy assassin to be involved in but the sequence demonstrated a dearth of moves afforded to the middle-aged Italian.

Yes, he's in his 50s – but he can still take out chumps like a champ, lobbing smoke bombs to perforate choking guards before leaping across ships and using a mounted flamethrower to wipe out an armada blocking his ship from leaving port. It's hardly indicative of the tone you'll see the rest of the game.

Revelations is tweaking the multiplayer model, giving players a better chance at defending themselves (or at least their score if not their character) with an 'honourable death' to bolster the victim's score and also throw the attacker off balance for a short moment. It also pays to sneak around before extinguishing your quarry, as you'll be rewarded with better and faster kill animation.

Whether or not you've already made your mind up about this you'll need to prepare to gouge your bank account like Ezio gouges guts. More soon.

ASSASSIN'S CREED REVELATIONS

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL OUT: NOVEMBER 2011

Despite the *Brothers in Arms* branding, *Furious 4* has a lot more in common with Gearbox's *Borderlands* than its (until now) starkly realistic WWII series.

Gearbox plans to continue Matt Baker's story in another game. *Furious 4* is a spin-off, an over-the-top, four-player co-op shooter that looks and plays like a mash-up of *Borderlands* meets *Inglourious Basterds* with a dash of *Bulletstorm*.

The live demo of *Furious 4* showcased a blitz on a Nazi fairground while all the Krauts in attendance are in a drunken post-Oktoberfest haze. The objective? Kill Hitler, no less.

The cast includes Chok (a Tomahawk-wielding Native American), Montana (a huge slab of a man hulking a chaingun), Stitch (who seems to relish zapping Nazis in the cads with a makeshift electroshock weapon) and Crockett (a Southern-fried maniac who brands victims on the forehead with a map of Texas). Each character has a series of abilities you can unlock by, you guessed it, killin' more Nazis. For instance, during the demo Montana unlocked the ability to set a trap with a nasty surprise: bear traps with grenades in them.

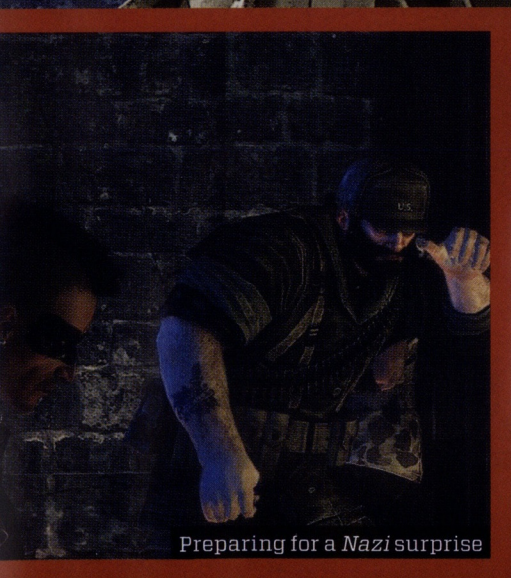
The HUD seemed a bit cluttered with the constant bombardment of points/achievement information but the game makes nice use of floating, in-game text for mission names and goals; they're written *within* the game world.

With modern shooters saturating the marketplace from every angle it's good to see a game returning to occupied Europe again. That *Furious 4* is entirely unlike the melodramatic WWII shooter we're accustomed to is even better.

Whatever happens, it certainly appears the *Furious 4* ain't in the prisoner-takin' business; they're in the killin' Nazi business. And cousin, business is a-boomin'.

BROTHERS IN ARMS: FURIOUS 4

DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE OUT: TBC 2012




Preparing for a Nazi surprise



DEVELOPER: UBISOFT REFLECTIONS OUT: SEPTEMBER 2011

SAN FR



Lara Croft is on the comeback trail. These are words that we'd never expect to have to have written, as the pin-up girl (literally, in some cases) for gaming has wallowed in so-so titles.

After a few years of Ezio showing how to scramble over a wall and Nathan Drake enthralling the world with superb adventures, both leaving players with unforgettable experiences, Lara has an uphill battle. One that's mostly covered in blood and is dripping wet.

Crystal Dynamics doesn't want her to live in the shadow of the assassin or the adventurer, and this latest *Tomb Raider* edges on survival horror. Trapped on an island that's perpetually soaked in thunderstorms, Lara's going to weave her way between open areas and caves with tumbling rocks, but whether you're in the weather or scraping your way underground it'll play at your claustrophobia with the camera pulled in tight.

She knows how to move, too, and the new physics system opens up a whole world of puzzles. This could be this make or Drake for the grand dame of gaming.

DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS OUT: TBC 2012

TOMB RAIDER

Out of all the games we got to see and play at E3, *Driver: San Francisco* was the title that had us begging for just one more go. Last month we got hands on with a portion of the single-player story, but our time in LA was all about one of 11 multiplayer modes called 'Tag'.

It's a simple premise. One person is 'it', and everyone else has to chase them. Tag the leader and you start to rack up points and have to floor it before anyone tags you. When you're 'it' you're stuck in your car, but everyone else can use the 'shift' mechanic and become a vehicle that's hurtling towards you, or one that's about to broadside your backside. First to hit the point limit wins.

This is an enormous amount of fun, and it's incredible to see the game keeping up with the octet of racers thrashing around the city. You need to apply tactics too, as when you're being chased you can't shift out of the vehicle you're in.

We also re-confirmed our thoughts of the handling – it's absolutely spot-on. Planting the accelerator will leave you squirming on the spot, but crashing doesn't mean it's instantly game over. Excited? You should be.



The streets of San Fran. Utter car-nage



The Ford RS200. It's a rally good ride



Yes, you'll have a wheely great time with this

DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

Fact: *The Darkness* was a brooding comic adventure with a wicked twist, and a heart-wrenching story starring a Mafia hit man, Jackie Estacado, with demonic limbs. It won fans for attention to detail, its deliberate pacing and the uniqueness of the actual darkness powers. If you never played it, get it.

This sequel alters the art style to be 'comic noir' – a semi cel-shaded affair – but this is an adult game. The limbs that haunt Jackie snap and fight with him, the violence is unapologetic and the humour is very, very dark.

Its core concept remains but you're afforded much greater and flexible power now. Stick to the shadows and your otherworldly appendages can snake out and strike, or reef weapons from the hands of goons before turning the weapon on its ex-owner, and you're rewarded for being gruesome. Eat a man's heart, earn 10 points. Disembowel him, collect 25 points. These points go towards unlocking skills, such as channeling the Darkness to provide unlimited ammo or bullets that can clip through walls. This is a nightmare you'll want to have.

THE DARKNESS II

DEVELOPER: DIGITAL EXTREMES OUT: OCTOBER 2011



MASS EFFECT 2

DEVELOPER: BOWARE OUT: MARCH 2012

It's a damn shame that the first part of this trilogy isn't on PS3. Hold your tears though, as fans of *Mass Effect 2* (and that should be everyone old enough to play it) will love this closing chapter.

The stages that we saw promise more of the same in terms of gameplay with a few new tactical options, but the choices you made during Shepard's time in the middle act greatly affect who shows up in 2012's sci-fi extravaganza when the Reapers attack planet Earth.

On the ground you have a new move in your repertoire with a vicious melee attack using a holographic Omniblade, and Shepard can also upgrade weaponry by tossing weapons on a bench to fit them with various attachments. What really impressed us is how fantastic action sequences are built up, seamlessly sashaying from gameplay into a cutscene and back again without breaking the flow.

We saw just a tiny sliver of what to expect and we're anxious to go back into space. Bring it.

Shiny helmets: a mirror for mayhem



One of the cast that you *don't* have sex with



Shepard, moments away from droid rage





Not the best moment to check your watch



Maybe he just wants a hug. Of bullets



Things are going to better than OK. They'll be AK

DEAD ISLAND

DEVELOPER: TECHLAND OUT: SEPTEMBER 2011

The Australian Classification Board is going to have a fit when this arrives later this year. Extremities are lopped off in very messy ways and there's a constant sense of urgency to get to a safe house, or at least just away from the mob of zombies invading your space.

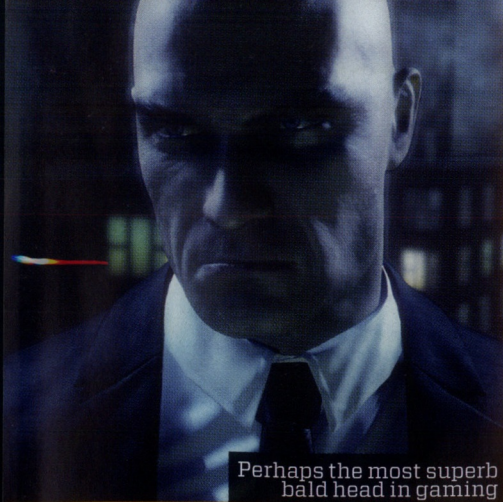
There's a lot of hype surrounding *Dead Island*, built up from some extremely lush and emotive trailers. While these sequences represent the tone of the game they don't give a fair indication of how it plays.

At this stage, the game is a little rough. Controls felt a little sluggish and there was plenty of screen tearing as we raced across a beach, trying to rescue a man from a burning car and a cluster of the undead. We still dare you to play this with a steady pulse.

You'll quickly need to readjust your play style from all-out hack 'em up action to being more paced and considered. As a horror title it's spot on with nightmarish growls and screams ricocheting through the speakers and you're immediately drawn into the action with a very tight camera view.

Yes, we're still excited, but there's some way to go before this is ready for market.





Perhaps the most superb bald head in gaming



Great assassin, but he's hardly inconspicuous



The opening room from *The Hangover Part III*

HITMAN ABSOLUTION

DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE OUT: TBC 2012

The truly unique *Hitman* series finally returns, complete with its multiple ways to murderise your marks.

A key element of *Hitman Absolution* gameplay is the ability to tap into Agent 47's "Instinct" – with the push of a button players are able to see the world through the unflinching eyes of natural born killer Agent 47.

In this mode escape routes, weapons, shortcuts – and even the paths that Agent 47 suspects enemies will walk – are highlighted. This added layer will allow you operate as ruthlessly efficiently as a stone-cold assassin would, although it's not required (and reportedly unavailable at higher difficulties).

The demo took place in Chicago during a citywide manhunt for 47. 47 begins the level unarmed and trapped in a library and it's immediately evident *Absolution* has evolved enormously from *Blood Money*. Enemies are smarter, the gameplay is more fluid and the gunplay has been improved.

The developers have also described the disguise system as far less binary. In previous games the second you were sprung your disguise was permanently blown. In *Absolution* the approach is more organic. If you're caught in someone else's duds but 'contain' the witnesses you'll be able to continue on in your clandestine clobber.

The demo ended with 47, in a police uniform, standing in front of a table in a lobby brimming with cops. On the table is an assault rifle next to a box of doughnuts. 47 picks up... a doughnut. He eats it, pauses to reply to a question from a nearby officer and leaves the building, disappearing into the crowd. Nice.

RAGE

DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE OUT: OCTOBER 2011

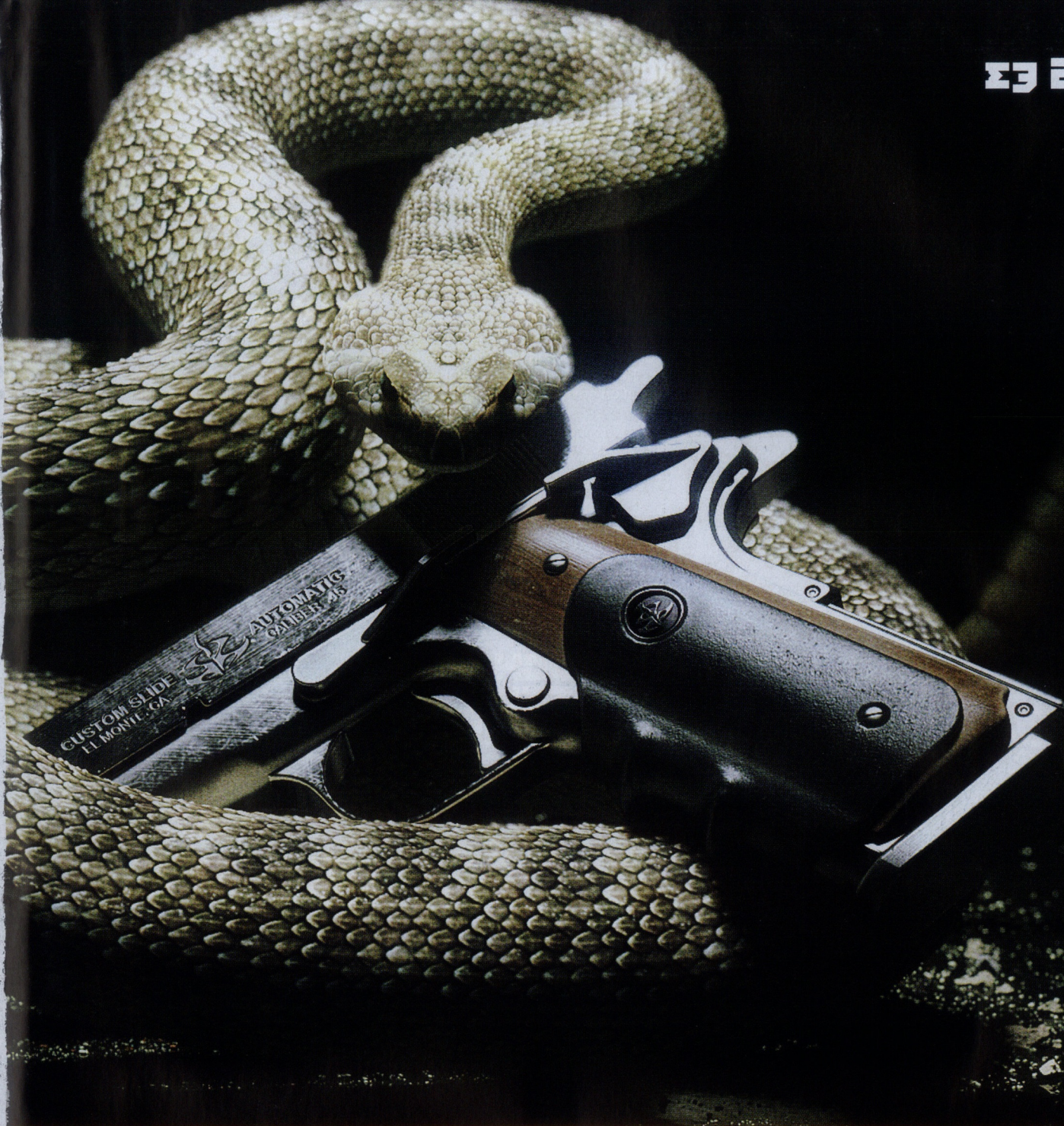


Even if you didn't know anything at all about the storyline of id's latest shooter-adventure when you pick up the controller, you'd be immediately snared by how freaking good it looks: it does ugly in a beautiful way. Think desolate waste ground populated by marauders and freaks whose firepower is in inverse proportion to the amount of teeth they have.

If you're thinking *Borderlands*, don't. While they share on-paper similarities this is a more 'straight' shooter than one with RPG elements, and the tone is more serious. It's destined to shine as a game in its own right as id want it to stand apart from the likes of *Doom*, *Quake* and *Wolfenstein*.

Like a bunch of other games at E3, the developers were especially proud of their new engine – id Tech 5 – powering the graphics, sound and so on. 'Variety' is their mantra – you're not going to be running through the same corridors over and over, or using the same weapon for hours at a time.

It feels pretty fast, and responsive too, though it's not all about shooting. We zipped across the badlands in a buggy and burned around a track in a time trial. Racing felt competent but the on foot sections were more than solid. We just hope it doesn't get lost amongst the glut of shooters due out this year.



Set your expression to 'surprised' and prepare to make some space between *Borderlands* and *Crysis 2*. While the first one didn't make it PlayStation this shouldn't stop you getting involved in its sequel with an art style that's being billed as 'alien noir' by its creators.

What made us smile was the freedom the game gives you. This open-world lets you choose your mission and the way you want to complete it, with the agility of Faith from *Mirror's Edge*. Cleverly, you can leap onto a ledge, hold yourself by your fingertips and fire over, using your floor-level vantage point as cover.

We saw our character vaulting objects, sliding behind low-lying walls and using some vicious-looking bolas to capture a bloke who could teleport past danger. With the target captured you could either turn him in to your client, or listen to his offer – he'd pay twice as much as your employer – and let him go. Make your choice and live with the consequences, where the 'right' choice is the one that you make with your gut.

What's really impressive though is the amount of life in the world around you. If you want to poke your nose into a fight between three strangers you can, or you can play it straight. Ready your trigger finger.

DEVELOPER: HUMAN HEAD STUDIOS OUT: TBC 2012

PREY 2



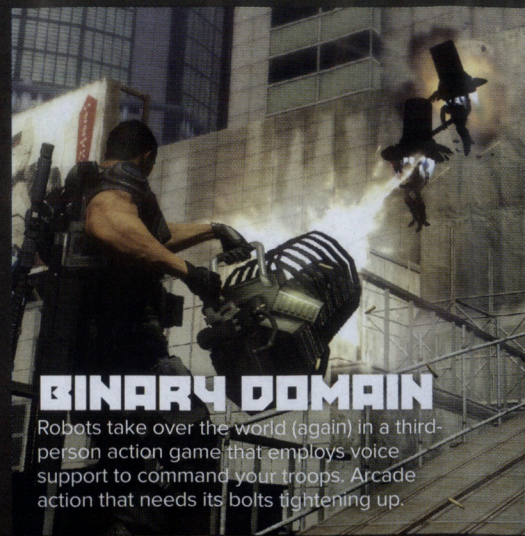
OVERSTRIKE

While all you want about Insomniac going multi-platform, this four-player co-op, third-person shooter is looking hot. Features humour and a butt tonne of crazy guns and gadgets.



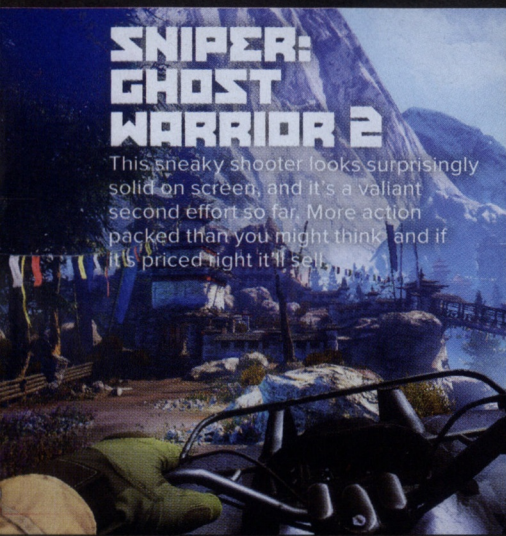
RAYMAN ORIGINS

Gorgeous hand drawn sprites and fun, challenging four-player co-op. This is to platformers what the LEGO series is to action-adventure games.



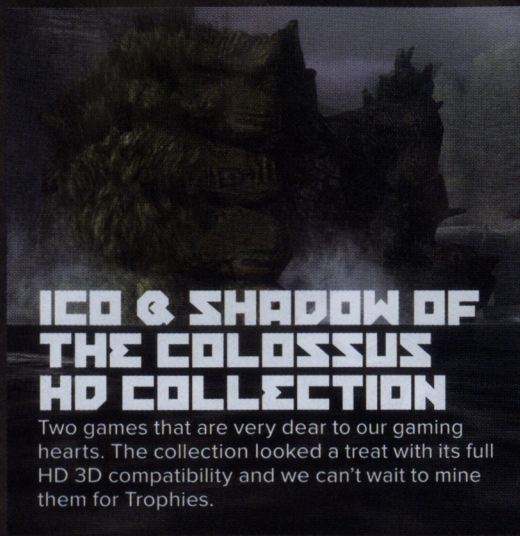
BINARY DOMAIN

Robots take over the world (again) in a third-person action game that employs voice support to command your troops. Arcade action that needs its bolts tightening up.



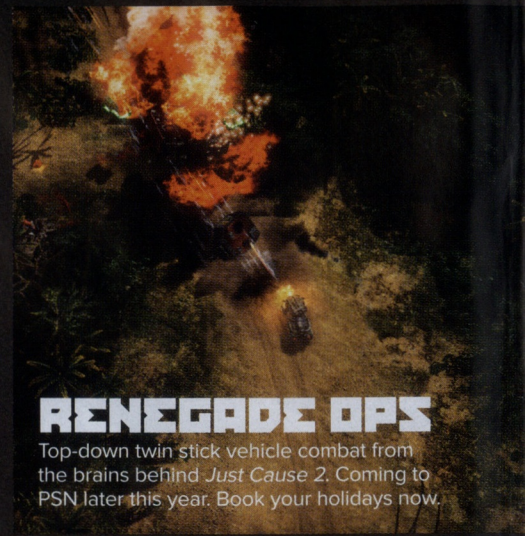
SNIPER: GHOST WARRIOR 2

This sneaky shooter looks surprisingly solid on screen, and it's a valiant second effort so far. More action packed than you might think, and if it's priced right it'll sell.



ICO & SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS HD COLLECTION

Two games that are very dear to our gaming hearts. The collection looked a treat with its full HD 3D compatibility and we can't wait to mine them for Trophies.



RENEGADE OPS

Top-down twin stick vehicle combat from the brains behind *Just Cause 2*. Coming to PSN later this year. Book your holidays now.



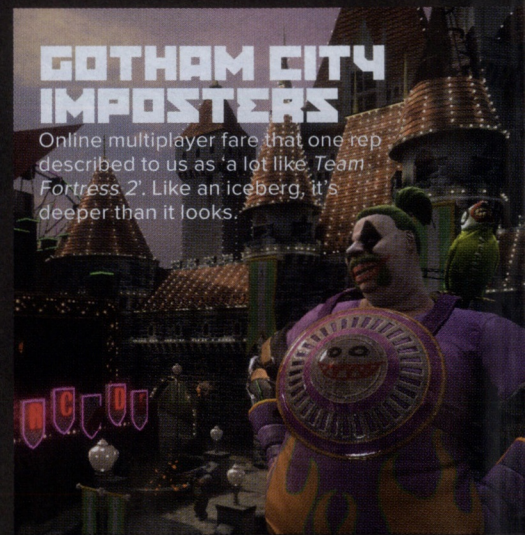
THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN

Looking pretty tight for a movie tie-in. Offers a blend of exploration, puzzles and combat (both sword fighting and aerial dogfighting). Feel that? It's our very cautious optimism.



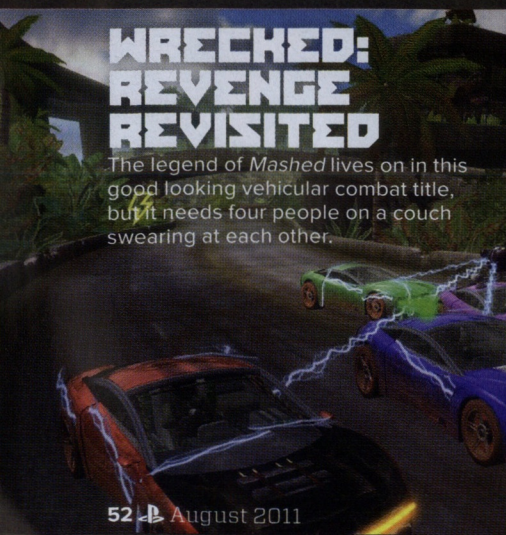
SONIC GENERATIONS

The 2D sections look wicked, and the 3D bits are the best they've been but they're still flat (ironically). Awful music, too.



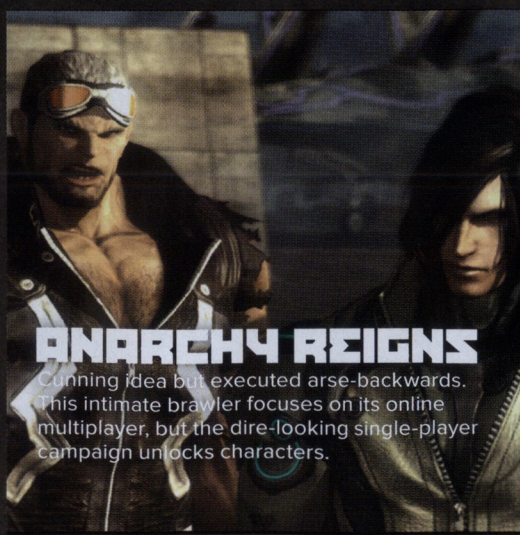
GOTHAM CITY IMPOSTERS

Online multiplayer fare that one rep described to us as 'a lot like *Team Fortress 2*'. Like an iceberg, it's deeper than it looks.



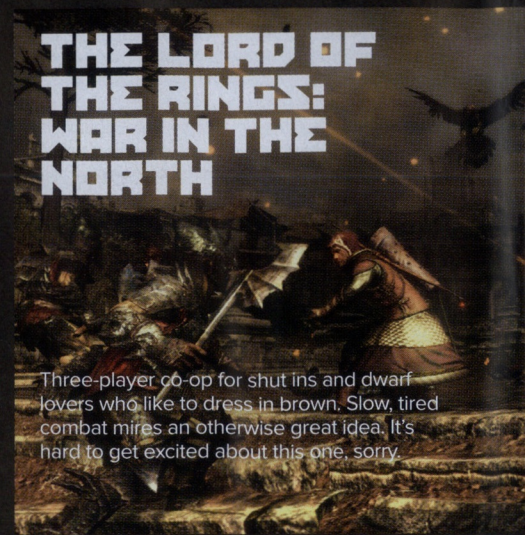
WRECKED: REVENGE REVISITED

The legend of *Mashed* lives on in this good looking vehicular combat title, but it needs four people on a couch swearing at each other.



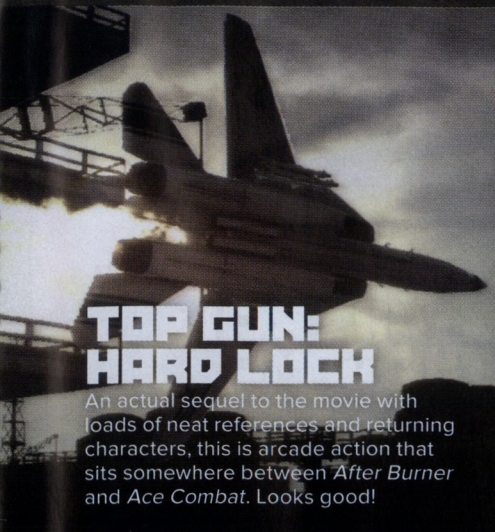
ANARCHY REIGNS

Cunning idea but executed arse-backwards. This intimate brayler focuses on its online multiplayer, but the dire-looking single-player campaign unlocks characters.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: WAR IN THE NORTH

Three-player co-op for shut ins and dwarf lovers who like to dress in brown. Slow, tired combat mires an otherwise great idea. It's hard to get excited about this one, sorry.



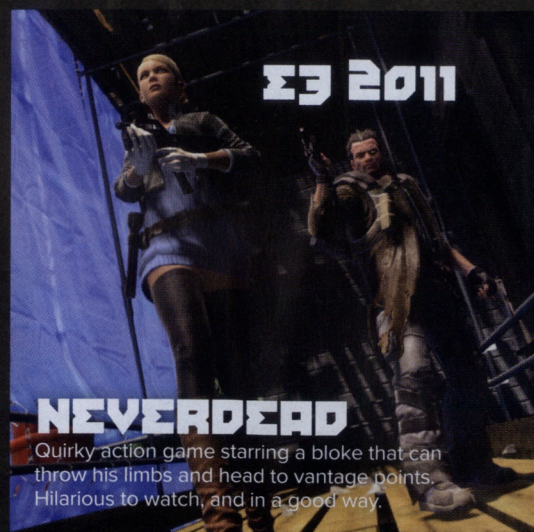
TOP GUN: HARD LOCK

An actual sequel to the movie with loads of neat references and returning characters, this is arcade action that sits somewhere between *After Burner* and *Ace Combat*. Looks good!



COMBAT WINGS: GREAT BATTLES OF WWII

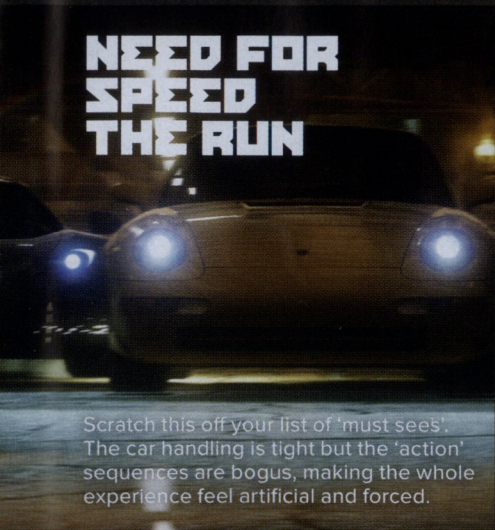
None of that lock-on crap here. This was when real pilots looked their enemies in the face before riddling them with bullets from 50 metres. Looked so promising we Messerschmitt in our pants.



Σ3 2011

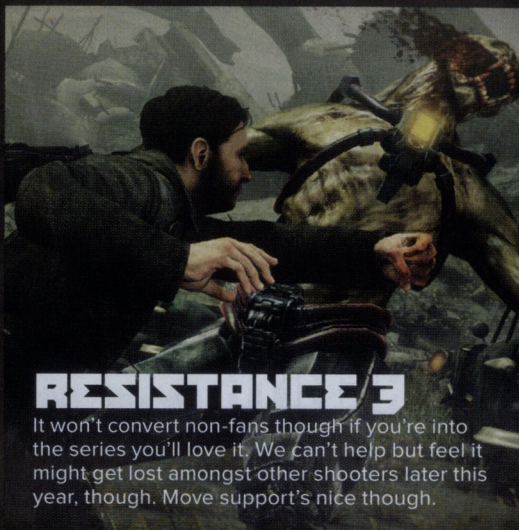
NEVERDEAD

Quirky action game starring a bloke that can throw his limbs and head to vantage points. Hilarious to watch, and in a good way.



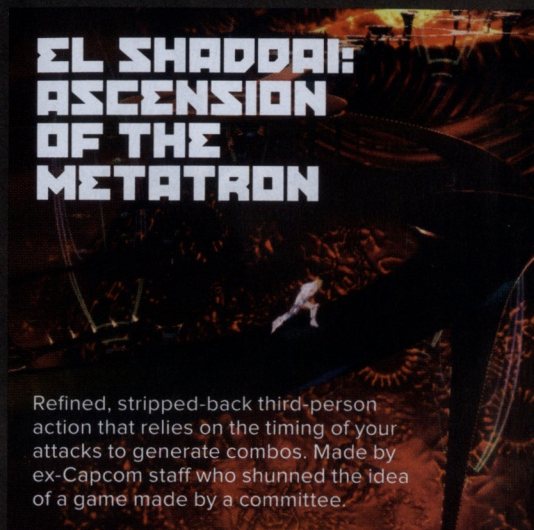
NEED FOR SPEED THE RUN

Scratch this off your list of 'must sees'. The car handling is tight but the 'action' sequences are bogus, making the whole experience feel artificial and forced.



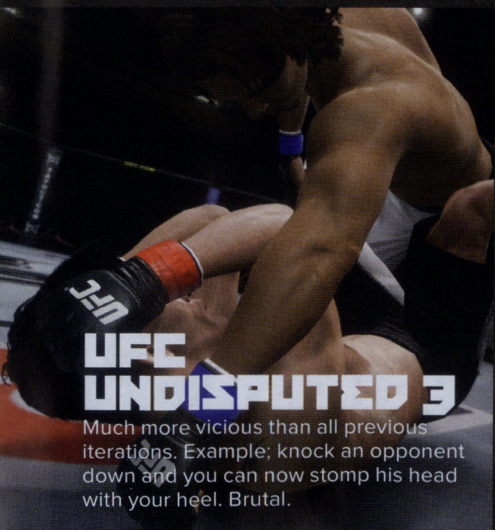
RESISTANCE 3

It won't convert non-fans though if you're into the series you'll love it. We can't help but feel it might get lost amongst other shooters later this year, though. Move support's nice though.



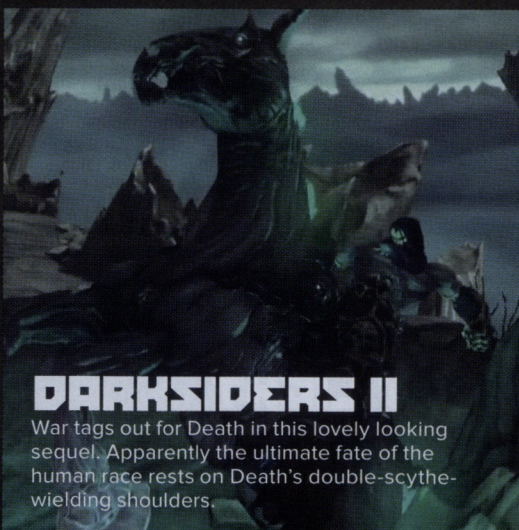
EL SHADDAI: ASCENSION OF THE METATRON

Refined, stripped-back third-person action that relies on the timing of your attacks to generate combos. Made by ex-Capcom staff who shunned the idea of a game made by a committee.



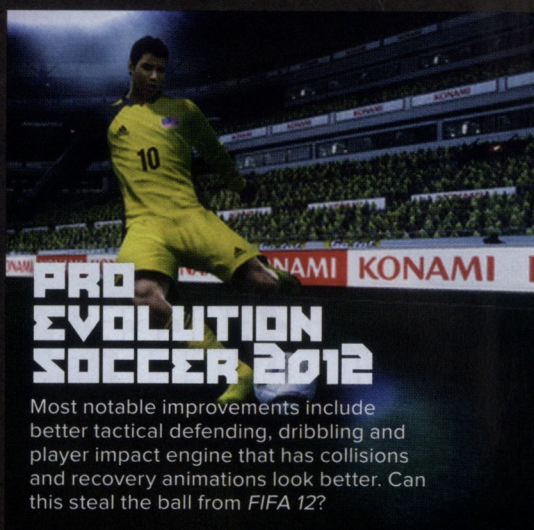
UFC UNDISPUTED 3

Much more vicious than all previous iterations. Example; knock an opponent down and you can now stomp his head with your heel. Brutal.



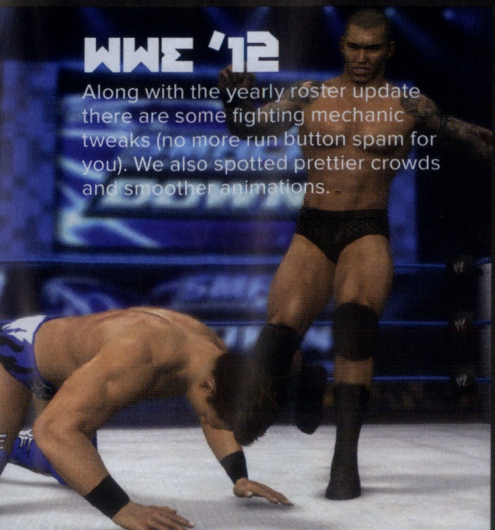
DARKSIDERS II

War tags out for Death in this lovely looking sequel. Apparently the ultimate fate of the human race rests on Death's double-scythe-wielding shoulders.



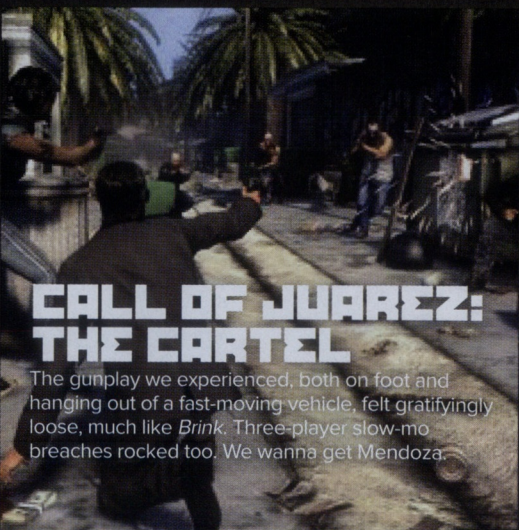
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2012

Most notable improvements include better tactical defending, dribbling and player impact engine that has collisions and recovery animations look better. Can this steal the ball from FIFA 12?



WWE '12

Along with the yearly roster update there are some fighting mechanic tweaks (no more run button spam for you). We also spotted prettier crowds and smoother animations.



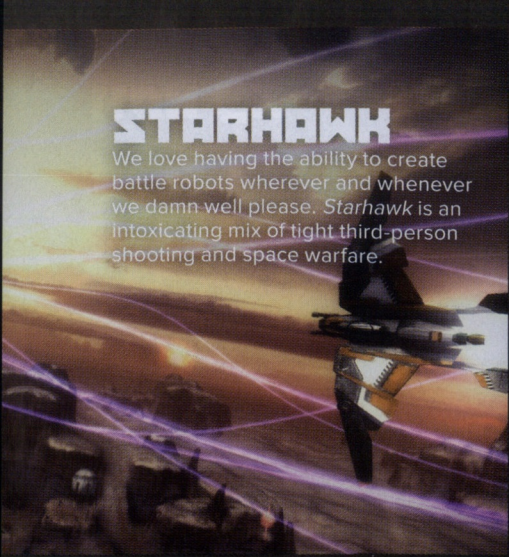
CALL OF JUAREZ: THE CARTEL

The gunplay we experienced, both on foot and hanging out of a fast-moving vehicle, felt gratifyingly loose, much like *Brink*. Three-player slow-mo breaches rocked too. We wanna get Mendoza.



GOD OF WAR ORIGINS

Chains of Olympus and *Ghost of Sparta* HD remastered on a single Blu-ray disc with support for two analogue sticks? Hell yes. This looked like a scoop and a half.

A screenshot from the game Starhawk showing a futuristic battle robot in a desert-like environment with purple energy beams.

STARHAWK

We love having the ability to create battle robots wherever and whenever we damn well please. *Starhawk* is an intoxicating mix of tight third-person shooting and space warfare.

A screenshot from the game Dust 514 showing a futuristic battle robot in a dark, industrial environment.

DUST 514

A FPS/MMO hybrid that primarily features ground combat with real time configurable weapons and vehicles. It's the "taking orders from little Timmy Gamer" idea that doesn't sit well with us.

A screenshot from the game Star Trek: The Game showing a character in a Star Trek uniform in a futuristic setting.

STAR TREK: THE GAME

Built as a co-op experience, this lets you and a mate play as the green alien bashing Kirk or Vulcan bad-arse Spock. Could be as surprisingly acceptable as J.J. Abrams' movie.

A screenshot from the game Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier showing a soldier in a futuristic military setting.

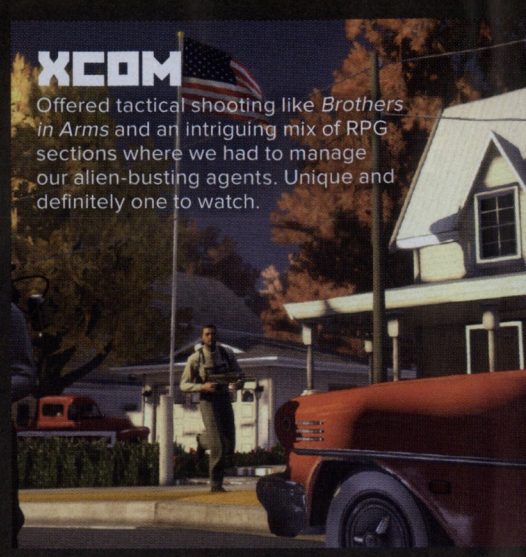
TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: FUTURE SOLDIER

Looks and feels solid and, at the very least, it'll challenge some developers to think about the way they implement the player's HUD. Tactical and rewarding shooting.

A screenshot from the game Rocksmith showing a guitar on a stage with a rock band background.

ROCKSMITH

The big news is; this works well with a real guitar. The game also scales in difficulty, offering less seasoned guitar players mini-games (like *Space Invaders*) to earn their chops.

A screenshot from the game XCOM showing a soldier in a military setting with a house in the background.

XCOM

Offered tactical shooting like *Brothers in Arms* and an intriguing mix of RPG sections where we had to manage our alien-busting agents. Unique and definitely one to watch.

A screenshot from the game Ridge Racer Unbounded showing a futuristic racing car on a track.

RIDGE RACER UNBOUNDED

Traditional *Ridge Racer* circuit racing infused with the destructive predilections of the people who brought you *FlatOut*. Looks great despite the lame-arse use of the word 'Unbounded'.

A screenshot from the game Metro: Last Light showing a character in a post-apocalyptic setting with a tent.

METRO: LAST LIGHT

Follow-up to the most underrated shooter in recent memory, *Last Light* improves its lighting and AI system. Genuinely looks to prove that in irradiated Soviet Russia, sequel plays YOU.

A screenshot from the game Payday: The Heist showing a character in a heist setting with a bank in the background.


PAYDAY: THE HEIST

Some geniuses decided to take the concept of four-player co-op in *Left 4 Dead* and re-use it in a bank heist setting. The result: the game *Kane & Lynch* should have been.

A screenshot from the game Bodycount showing a character in a post-apocalyptic setting with a building.

BODYCOUNT

Played like a glorious '80s action movie. Almost every scenic element could be shredded with bullets and 'nades. Open and expansive levels with multiple routes says 'yes' to us also.

A screenshot from the game Birds of Steel showing a biplane in a WWII setting.

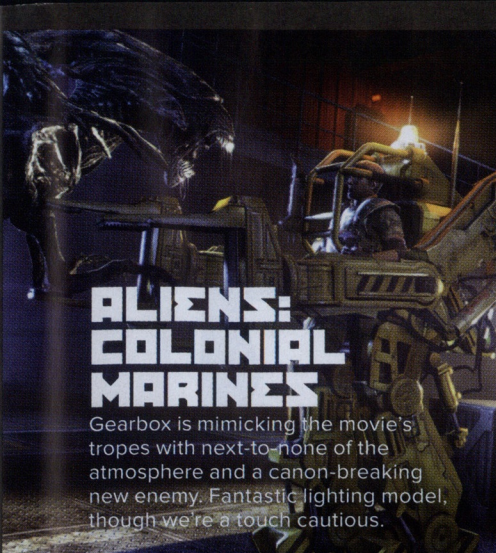
BIRDS OF STEEL

Yet another WWII plane-gasm that is squarely in our crosshairs. Offered us hundreds of planes and just as many missions. Amazing attention to detail in historical accuracy and physics.

A screenshot from the game Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time showing a character in a heist setting with a building.

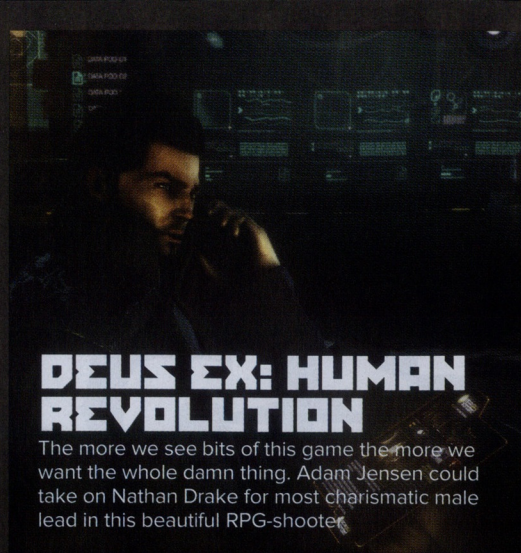
SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME

This platformer featuring slick Sly and bumbling Murray may not be a Sucker Punch production, but it may well steal our hearts away, regardless. Looks pretty, handles well. Separation anxiety: over.



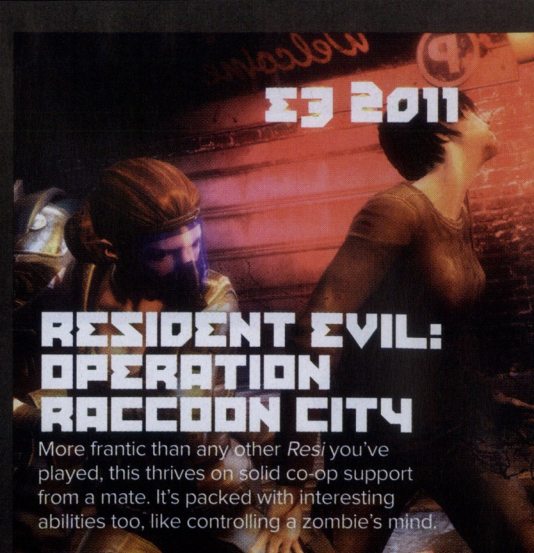
ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

Gearbox is mimicking the movie's tropes with next-to-none of the atmosphere and a canon-breaking new enemy. Fantastic lighting model, though we're a touch cautious.



DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

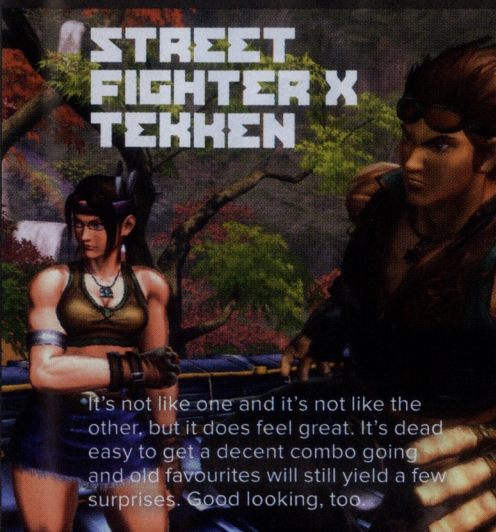
The more we see bits of this game the more we want the whole damn thing. Adam Jensen could take on Nathan Drake for most charismatic male lead in this beautiful RPG-shooter.



23 2011

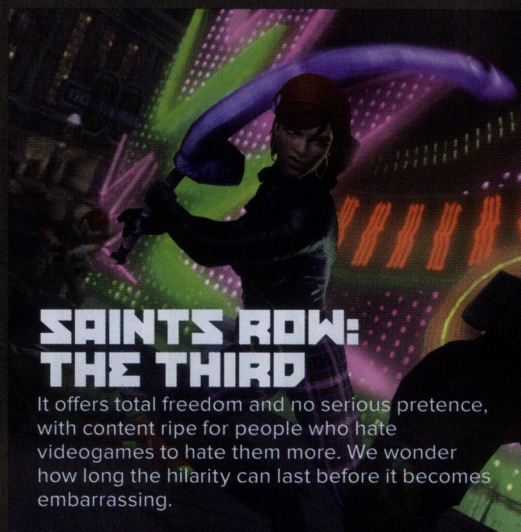
RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY

More frantic than any other *Resi* you've played, this thrives on solid co-op support from a mate. It's packed with interesting abilities too, like controlling a zombie's mind.



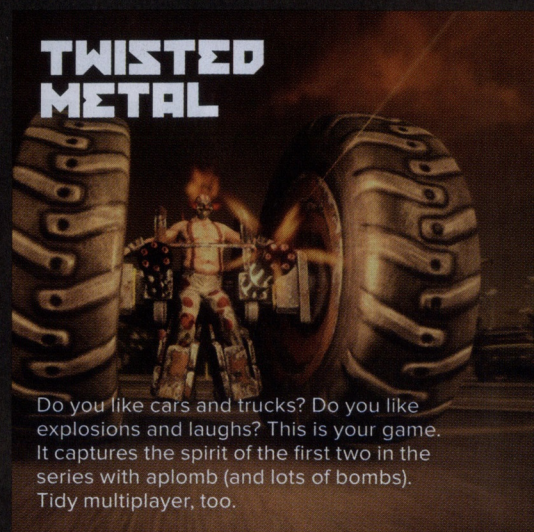
STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

It's not like one and it's not like the other, but it does feel great. It's dead easy to get a decent combo going and old favourites will still yield a few surprises. Good looking, too.



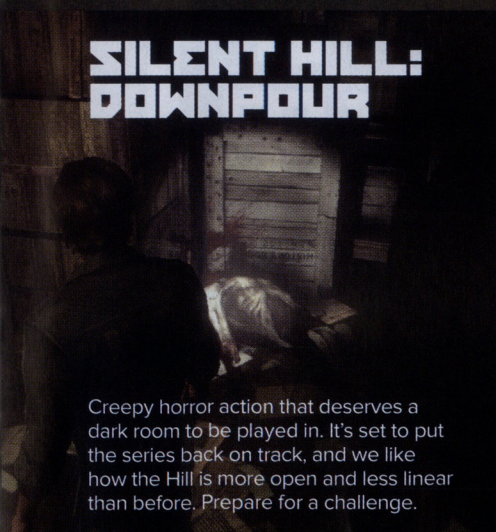
SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD

It offers total freedom and no serious pretence, with content ripe for people who hate videogames to hate them more. We wonder how long the hilarity can last before it becomes embarrassing.



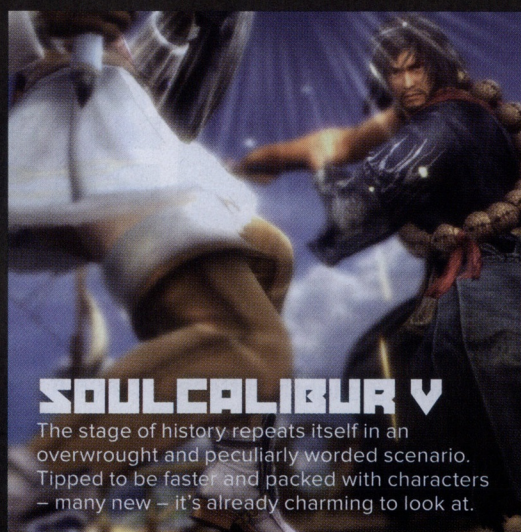
TWISTED METAL

Do you like cars and trucks? Do you like explosions and laughs? This is your game. It captures the spirit of the first two in the series with aplomb (and lots of bombs). Tidy multiplayer, too.



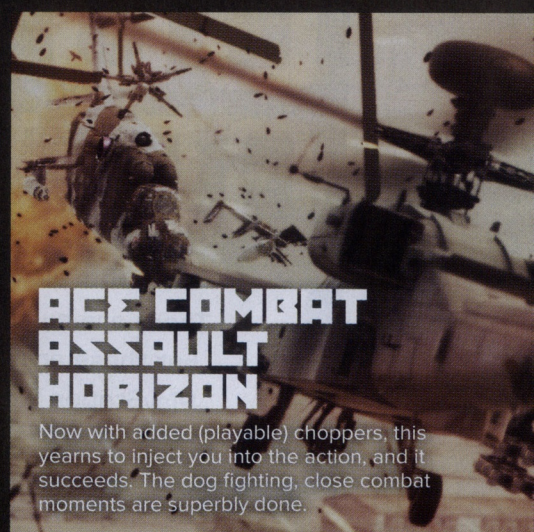
SILENT HILL: DOWNPOUR

Creepy horror action that deserves a dark room to be played in. It's set to put the series back on track, and we like how the Hill is more open and less linear than before. Prepare for a challenge.



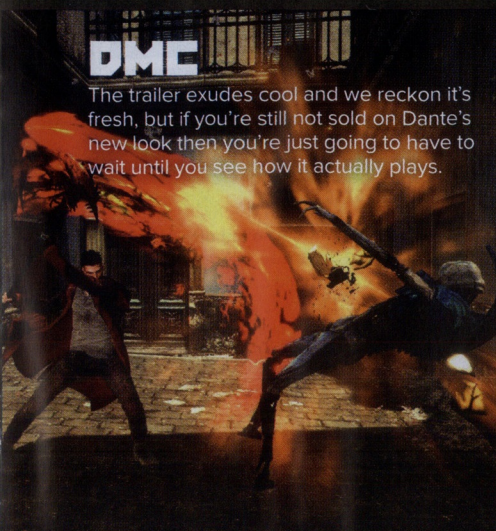
SOULCALIBUR V

The stage of history repeats itself in an overwrought and peculiarly worded scenario. Tipped to be faster and packed with characters – many new – it's already charming to look at.



ACE COMBAT ASSAULT HORIZON

Now with added (playable) choppers, this yearns to inject you into the action, and it succeeds. The dog fighting, close combat moments are superbly done.



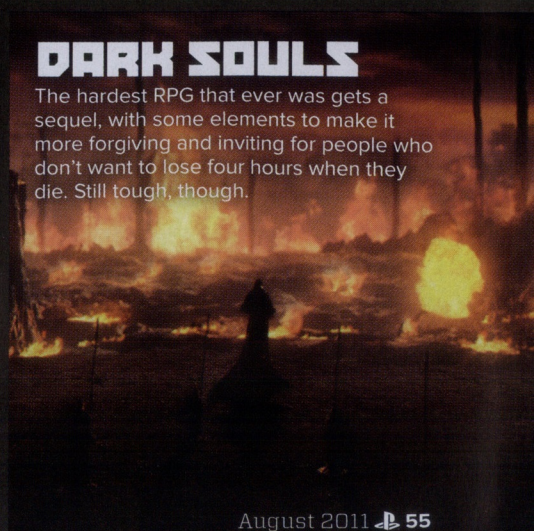
DmC

The trailer exudes cool and we reckon it's fresh, but if you're still not sold on Dante's new look then you're just going to have to wait until you see how it actually plays.



NINJA GAIDEN III

For when you just want to go apeshit with a sword, there's *Ninja Gaiden*. It's definitely brutal and the combat is peppered with quick-time events. No, they actually work.



DARK SOULS

The hardest RPG that ever was gets a sequel, with some elements to make it more forgiving and inviting for people who don't want to lose four hours when they die. Still tough, though.

25

STUDIOS GAMING COULDN'T GO WITHOUT

There are hundreds of videogame developers spread all across the globe – but these are the ones that'd leave the biggest shoes to fill. The world of PlayStation would become a slightly different place if any of these crucial companies were to vanish into fat air.

CAPCOM®

► WHO: Capcom

► WHERE: Osaka, Japan

► FOUNDED: 1983

What makes this studio so important?

Without talented Japanese developer Capcom the world would no longer ring with the word "Hadouken". The videogame zombie population would take a considerable hit too. Without Capcom other franchises would have nobody to crossover with.

► www.capcom.com

NAUGHTY DOG

- ▶ **WHO:** Naughty Dog
- ▶ **WHERE:** Santa Monica, California, USA
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1986

What makes this studio so important?

As an apex developer Naughty Dog is well renowned for consistently creating first-class franchises such as *Crash Bandicoot*, *Jak & Daxter* and *Uncharted*. A motion-capture innovator thoroughly dedicated to the art of in-game storytelling, Naughty Dog is essential.

▶ www.naughtydog.com

Criteriongames

- ▶ **WHO:** Criterion Games
- ▶ **WHERE:** Guildford, Surrey, England
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1993

What makes this studio so important?

Along with being the gatekeeper of the *Burnout* series, since 2010 Criterion also handles the *Hot Pursuit* titles in the *Need for Speed* series. When it comes to creating adrenaline-fuelled arcade racers nobody comes close to these guys.

▶ www.criteriongames.com



- ▶ **WHO:** Kojima Productions
- ▶ **WHERE:** Roppongi Hills, Tokyo, Japan
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 2005

What makes this studio so important?

This Japanese video game development studio is a subsidiary of Konami and is under the guidance of game designer and creative visionary Hideo Kojima. Key to the company's importance is the *Metal Gear* franchise, a series that has inherited the crown for the stealth genre.

▶ www.konami.jp/kojima_pro



- ▶ **WHO:** Ubisoft Montreal
- ▶ **WHERE:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1997

What makes this studio so important?

At 2500 employees Ubisoft Montreal is one of the largest developers in the world and is responsible for the *Prince of Persia* and *Assassin's Creed* series, as well as the *Tom Clancy's* franchise. Without them we'd have no closure on its Abtergo/Audiotore anecdote.

▶ www.ubi.com

BiOWARE CORP

- ▶ **WHO:** BioWare
- ▶ **WHERE:** Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1995

What makes this studio so important?

BioWare is one of the most talented creators of Western RPGs and MMORPGs. It is also one of the few creatives that can regularly appease a diametrically opposed fanbase of fantasy lovers (*Baldur's Gate*, *Dragon Age* series) and sci-fi nerds (*KOTOR* and *Mass Effect*).

▶ www.bioware.com



- ▶ **WHO:** Infinity Ward
- ▶ **WHERE:** Encino, California, USA
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 2002

What makes this studio so important?

Despite the ongoing legal shenanigans there's no denying that Infinity Ward still commands the most prestigious gaming franchise on the planet. *Black Ops* was the most successful entertainment product launch of all time so if anything can top it it'll be Infinity Ward and *Modern Warfare 3*.

▶ www.infinityward.com



- ▶ **WHO:** Rockstar North
- ▶ **WHERE:** Edinburgh, Scotland
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 2001

What makes this studio so important?

Formerly DMI Design (creators of *Lemmings*), Rockstar North is the undisputed king of the sandbox genre. Whenever it releases a game the whole industry pauses to watch. Rockstar North is also valued for its fearless love of paradigm breaking and controversy.

▶ www.rockstarnorth.com



- ▶ **WHO:** Epic Games
- ▶ **WHERE:** Cary, North Carolina, USA
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1991

What makes this studio so important?

Epic is the proprietor of three gaming engines that have powered more games than we care to count. Each Unreal Engine has had a complete feature set of graphical, sound and physics that can be widely adapted to fit the needs of any developer that doesn't want to code its own engine from scratch.

▶ www.epicgames.com



- ▶ **WHO:** EA Canada
- ▶ **WHERE:** Burnaby, BC, Canada
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1983

What makes this studio so important?

EA's oldest and largest studio is key to the software giant's dedication to put whatever 'it' is 'in the game'. Typically that 'it' is soccer balls, as EA Canada is responsible for the *FIFA* series. *FIFA 11* is the biggest and best-selling sports videogame in our solar system.

▶ www.ea.com



- **WHO:** Rockstar San Diego
- **WHERE:** San Diego, California, USA
- **FOUNDED:** 2003



What makes this studio so important?

Like all developers under the Rockstar umbrella, Rockstar San Diego is well known for its ability to craft open worlds, be they the mean streets in the *Midnight Club* or the romantic mesas of the *Red Dead* universe. We'd hate to be without the team that redefined videogame Westerns.

► www.rockstargames.com



- **WHO:** Bethesda Game Studios
- **WHERE:** Rockville, Maryland, USA
- **FOUNDED:** 1986



What makes this studio so important?

Yet another RPG luminary (thanks to *Fallout 3* and the *Elder Scrolls* series), Bethesda also enjoys the benefit of being a part of ZeniMax Media, a parent company that also owns id Software and the engine building genius that is John Carmack.

► www.bethsoft.com



- **WHO:** RAD Game Tools
- **WHERE:** Kirkland, Washington, USA
- **FOUNDED:** 1988



What makes this studio so important?

RAD Game Tools is the creator of, among other tools, Bink Video (a proprietary video file format used primarily in videogames). According to RAD at least one of its products is built into almost every videogame made today. To date the company claims to have appeared in more than 15,500 games.

► www.radgametools.com



- **WHO:** Insomniac Games
- **WHERE:** Burbank, California, USA
- **FOUNDED:** 1994



What makes this studio so important?

The unwavering arm of Insomniac has been holding the torch high for pure platforming bliss for almost a decade. Long after Jak and Daxter disappeared into the ether Ratchet and Clank remain in action, all thanks to Insomniac. Imagine that dynamic duo homeless.

► www.insomniacgames.com



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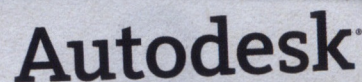
- **WHO:** DICE
- **WHERE:** Stockholm, Sweden
- **FOUNDED:** 1992



What makes this studio so important?

Along with being the keepers of the *Battlefield* series, DICE is the creator of the pants-tighteningly beautiful Frostbite 2.0 engine. The inside word to us is that they're also integral cross-project collaborators within the EA family, and world-class world builders.

► www.dice.se



- **WHO:** Autodesk
- **WHERE:** San Rafael, California, USA
- **FOUNDED:** 1982



What makes this studio so important?

Autodesk's Media and Entertainment Division has been operating out of Montreal, Canada since 1999 serving the games industry with middleware solutions as well as frequently used game art creation tools like 3DS Max, Maya and Softimage.

► www.autodesk.com



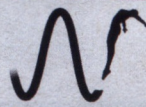
- **WHO:** Polyphony Digital
- **WHERE:** Edogawa, Tokyo, Japan
- **FOUNDED:** 1998



What makes this studio so important?

On his first day in the Sony Computer Entertainment offices, Kazunori Yamauchi wrote out a sample game design idea consisting only of the words "I want to drive my car on my television." The rest is history. Polyphony Digital is renown for recreating racetrack realism.

► www.polyphony.co.jp/english



naturalmotion

- **WHO:** Natural Motion
- **WHERE:** Oxford, England
- **FOUNDED:** 2001



What makes this studio so important?

NaturalMotion's euphoria engine is a true breakthrough in real-time character animation. It's the biomechanical AI system that makes the humans in *GTAIV* and *RDR* react so realistically to in-game forces. Picture those games with regular, canned animations instead and you'll see why its on the list.

► www.naturalmotion.com



codemasters™

- **WHO:** Codemasters
- **WHERE:** Warwickshire, England
- **FOUNDED:** 1986



What makes this studio so important?

One of the oldest and most prestigious British game developers Codemasters is comprised of what its moniker suggests. This studio has a long history of and obvious passion for crafting quality racing simulations. Still, they also like to charge money for cheats.

► www.codemasters.com

SQUARE ENIX



- ▶ **WHO:** Square Enix
- ▶ **WHERE:** Shibuya, Japan
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 2003



What makes this studio so important?

Undisputed master of the JRPG, Square Enix has garnered millions of fans worldwide. Without Square Enix *Final Fantasy* would be finalised and there'd be no *Kingdom Hearts* either, leaving only Disney to ensure that a new generation of kids see Donald Duck without pants.

▶ www.square-enix.com



- ▶ **WHO:** Team Bondi
- ▶ **WHERE:** Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 2003



What makes this studio so important?

The team that proves that, with the right investment, you can build world-class AAA games in Australia. The attention to detail Team Bondi displayed in *L.A. Noire* is head-and-shoulders above almost anything else out there. Gaming needs teams this dedicated to utter authenticity.

▶ www.teambondi.com



Treyarch

- ▶ **WHO:** Treyarch
- ▶ **WHERE:** Santa Monica, California, USA
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1996



What makes this studio so important?

As we mentioned earlier, *Black Ops* was a powerhouse piece of entertainment that smashed all previous sales records. You can thank Treyarch for that. You can also thank it in X years time when it announces *Black Ops 2: Blops Harder* and resets the records all over again.

▶ www.treyarch.com



- ▶ **WHO:** Valve
- ▶ **WHERE:** Bellevue, Washington, USA
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1996



What makes this studio so important?

One of the few developers with the resources (or balls) to use a 'when it's ready' release philosophy, Valve is the closest thing our industry has to a purveyor of perfection. Along with its impressive game titles Valve also hold the keys to the much vaunted Source engine.

▶ www.valvesoftware.com



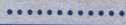
- ▶ **WHO:** Havok
- ▶ **WHERE:** Dublin, Ireland
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 1998



What makes this studio so important?

Developers all over the world overwhelmingly choose Havok technology when shopping for a physics solution. Havok technology appears in nearly 270 games on the market and Havok-physics powered console games out-sell the competition by a ratio of 7 to 1 based on both units and sales revenue.

▶ www.havok.com



- ▶ **WHO:** Firelight Technologies
- ▶ **WHERE:** Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- ▶ **FOUNDED:** 2002



What makes this studio so important?

The studio's FMOD products, a world-leading library and toolkit for the creation and playback of interactive audio, are widely regarded as the best audio tools in the games industry. FMOD supports more hardware platforms than any other audio system and supports all major game engines.

▶ www.fmod.org

Honourable Mentions

- ▶ **Rocksteady** - www.rocksteadyltd.com
Its work with *Batman* is the envy of many studios.
- ▶ **SCE Santa Monica** - www.worldwidestudios.net/santamonica
The home of *Kratos* knows production values.
- ▶ **Respawn Entertainment** - www.respawn.com
The former brains behind *Call of Duty* and super-studio in the making.
- ▶ **Gearbox Software** - www.gearboxsoftware.com
A hardworking gunslinger of a studio who'll work for anyone.
- ▶ **Media Molecule** - www.mediamolecule.com
Pushing the user-created content envelope.
- ▶ **Harmonix Music Systems** - www.harmonixmusic.com
The undisputed king of the music game genre.
- ▶ **Namco-Bandai** - www.namcobandagames.com
The gatekeepers of *Tekken* and *Soulcalibur* are a force to be reckoned with.
- ▶ **Guerrilla Games** - www.guerrilla-games.com
Proved with *Killzone 2* it can deliver games worthy of their hype.
- ▶ **Crytek** - www.crytek.com
Challenging the big boys on the first-person shooter block.
- ▶ **Slightly Mad Studios** - www.slightlymadstudios.com
Already filling the mirrors of *GT5* with *SHIFT 2*, looking to pass.
- ▶ **EA Black Box** - www.ea.com
The studio that put the *Tony Hawk's* series to pasture.
- ▶ **Visceral Games** - www.visceralgames.com
Can critical darling *Dead Space* usurp horror-king *Resident Evil*?
- ▶ **Platinum Games** - www.platinumgames.com
Gaming needs oddballs like the posse behind the barmy *Bayonetta*.
- ▶ **Irrational Games** - www.irrationalgames.com
You can thank this lot for *BioShock*, one of the games of the decade.
- ▶ **Sucker Punch** - www.suckerpunch.com
A team that knows how to make a power-fantasy or two.
- ▶ **IO Interactive** - www.ioi.dk
Hitman HQ should hit back with the long-awaited return of Agent 47.
- ▶ **Avalanche Studios** - www.avalanchestudios.se
These Swedes get fun. Play *Just Cause 2* if you need proof.
- ▶ **Crystal Dynamics** - www.crystald.com
In charge of the first lady of gaming and her gritty new revival.
- ▶ **Volition, Inc.** - www.volition-inc.com
Few do destruction quite as good as this wrecking crew.
- ▶ **SEGA** - www.sega.com
There's life in the House that Sonic Built yet.



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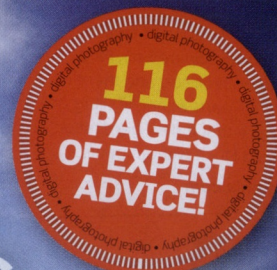
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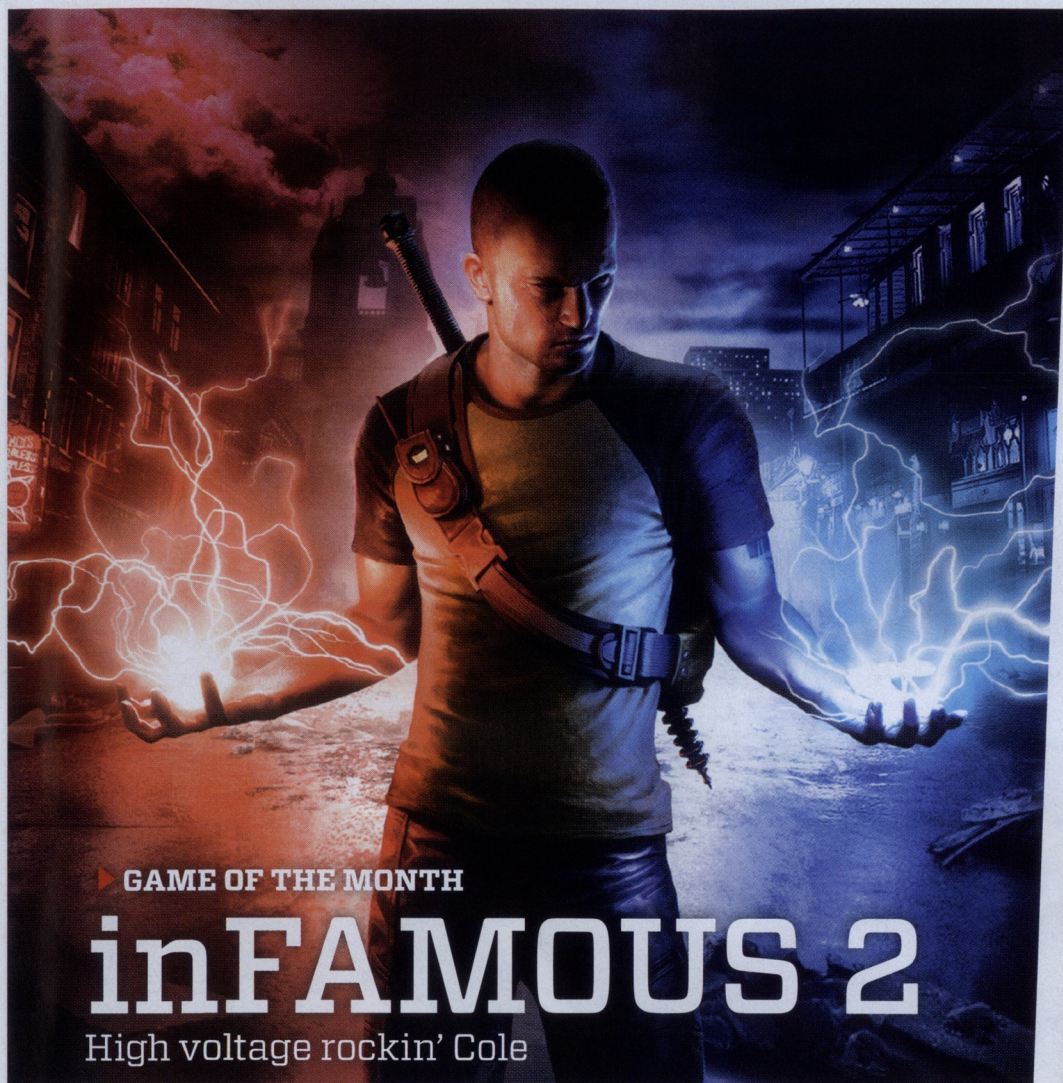
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in review



▶ **GAME OF THE MONTH**

inFAMOUS 2

High voltage rockin' Cole

Review ratings

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. *OPS* has handed out this score only once.

This Month

62 inFAMOUS 2

66 Duke Nukem
Forever

70 Shadows of
the Damned

72 Dungeon Siege III

74 Alice:
Madness Returns

76 White Knight
Chronicles II

78 Hunted: The
Demon's Forge

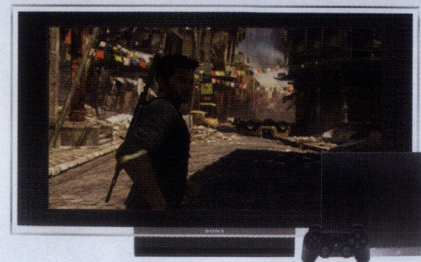
80 Red Faction:
Armageddon

81 Mortal Kombat

81 LEGO Pirates
of the Caribbean

81 MX vs. ATV Alive

81 SBK 11



▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.

**Play this
if you like**

inFAMOUS, Prototype

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRUBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: SUCKER PUNCH

PLAYERS: 1

PRICE: \$99.95





inFAMOUS 2

Shock, meet awe. Awe, shock

Using an electrified headbutt to short-out a redneck's brain is a criminally underused move in videogames. So too is the ability to surf on a car, levitate it, supercharge it with 1.21 gigawatts of hate and punch it into mutants and civilians alike. Collateral damage is a myth. This is the sort of crime-busting we can get behind.

OPS regulars will recall an interview we had with *inFAMOUS 2* developer Sucker Punch in which the team voiced their desire to improve all facets of this sequel across the board. We're here to tell you that the team has succeeded in amping their IP up considerably.

Admittedly, some prior knowledge of the first game is required to fully 'get' the goings-on of *inFAMOUS 2*. Abandon all hope of spoiler-free reading of the first game, all ye who enter here.

After his super shenanigans in Empire City our zappy hero Cole MacGrath has his arse whupped by The Beast. Realising he is under-powered, Cole retreats south to the city of New Marais (read: New Orleans). Once there he embarks upon a quest to super-size his powers by acquiring 7 "Blast core" pieces set across 40-odd missions of fun, fetch and adventure.

New Marais may only be sprawled across two islands compared to Empire City's three, but it's much prettier and more culturally diverse. The neon cabaret and French architecture of the opening city section is bustling and full of energy. This soon gives way to some destitute suburbs that are half submerged from a recent flood (read: full of lethal pitfalls for electro-men).

Last but not least, you'll find yourself monkeying around the various gantries and catwalks of an industrial section of town. Along with offering you the challenge of adapting to

new environments, Sucker Punch has capitalised on and enhanced the coolest traversal ideas that worked in the original game. Branching arteries of tram lines and rooftop wires crisscross the city and you can also quickly fire upwards on vertical power poles to ascend most buildings like a cockroach on red cordial.

What impressed us most is how clear-cut Cole's morality choices are now; thanks to an elementally charged love triangle between two feuding femme fatales. Most of your dastardly deeds will be encouraged by Nix, a fiery Cajun who just wants to watch the world burn. Conversely, you can heal the world under the guidance of Kuo, a somewhat frigid goody-two-shoes ice goddess. Given that the two (quite literally) get along like fire and ice, there's probably no ménage Easter Egg to speak of.

Each karmic path is represented in three tiers on your HUD and whether you're naughty or nice is something determined by both your minor actions taken in errand missions, and the major plot decisions. Interestingly, wooing the right girl and siding with her over a handful of large moral choices offers Cole the opportunity to further augment his powers beyond static electricity. Keep Kuo happy and you can be freezing your redneck foes into 'hick-cicles'. Stick it to the man and make Nix laugh maniacally and you can be melting the locals down into trailer trash stew.

There's typically a two-step way to unlock said powers. Reaching a tier earns you a basic power, and to expand upon that skill you'll need to attempt neat gameplay challenges that require unique approaches to combat situations (eg: 10 headshots from a certain distance with a certain power). It's a rad idea that encourages constant

tactical variety, rather than basic bolt spammage. By the endgame you'll know all of Cole's many abilities inside and out.

Trundling through the main quest isn't quite enough to earn you that epic third tier of powers. To become a super-superhero you'll really need to take on the preset and randomised sidequest deeds that pop up on the mini-map. Almost like a loot system in an RPG, *inFAMOUS 2* will keep you strangely transfixed as you detour across the city to reap rewards from community service deeds. ▶



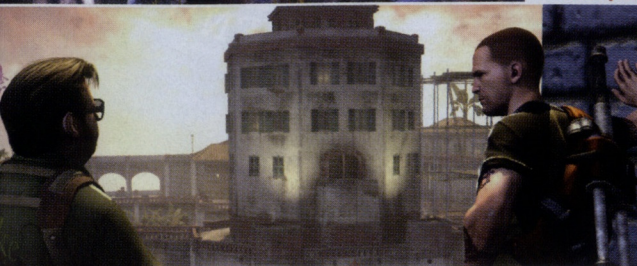
Pictured: a cool dude



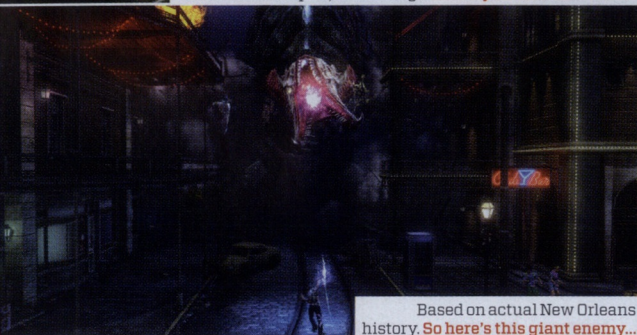
Cole is above the puns that we are not



Ice: to see you



"Back for the sequel, hound dog? Heard you died on a toilet"



Based on actual New Orleans history. So here's this giant enemy...



Scuff the crap out of your carpet and this could be you kids



Power to the people

Cole's newest adventure takes him on a journey that earns him an important decision to complement his electrical powers. Nix and Kuo's addition to the world adds huge benefits, aside from Kuo's desire to save the world and Nix's passion for destruction, the two advisers have their own powers that you'll get the opportunity to wield. As you play *inFAMOUS 2*, you are given a choice. There's a point where you have to decide to inherit Kuo's Ice or Nix's napalm. It's a choice that cannot be reversed.

Some personal favourites include Nix's Demon Drain (an area-of-effect power which lets Cole drain the life from enemies standing around him). And we also liked Kuo's Sheet of Ice (which gives some more oomph to your force push ability with a wall of frozen water).

But here's a cool twist: complete the story twice, once with the Hero route and a second time as the Villain (or vice versa) and after the second play through a message will come up as a new post game becomes available. It will confirm that you have completed both paths in the game and that for your awesomeness you've unlocked access to the opposite Karma powers of your current Cole along with the powers of the character you didn't transfer with. You are also granted 15,000XP to help boost your impressive collection of powers up. Pretty awesome, no?

Every errand offers you either morality points, XP to buy moves, 'ammo' upgrades or just the pure undeniable joy that comes from hunting down and zapping carrier pigeons.

Good deeds include preventing kidnaps, dismantling bombs or charging mobs of unconscious citizens back to life (whilst yelling "Clear!" at your television). On the other hand, the more prick-tastic actions include murdering saxophone playing hippies, ending street mimes (makes sense so far), or you can rock up to the good missions and kill everybody on the scene and let God sort 'em out (as you get a high-five from the Devil). Whichever way you go, Cole's visage, attitude in cutscenes and ultimate endings are tweaked accordingly, giving you a palpable feeling of having an influence in the world. It also has to be said that we found our journey between each of the main mission points to be constantly, and quite happily, postponed.

Executing those constant detours with Cole is a pleasure too. As in the previous game your movement feels buttery smooth and the freewheeling free-running system still has that habit of keeping traversal flowing by second guessing where you wish to leap. Admittedly, this will take some getting used to for the first-timers as it can feel like the system anticipates you incorrectly, at least until you learn to 'compensate for it as it's trying to compensate for you'. It's quite an odd sensation that goes away the more you play the game.

Along with the typical escalation of Cole's powers, Sucker Punch has seen fit to rejig the melee system as well. Honestly, it's a bit hit and miss. On the one hand Cole looks bloody stylish as he attitude-adjusts the baddies with his new Amp club, issuing wince-inducing finishers as the camera does its very best to do the 'Batman angle thing'. But as appealing and visceral as that looks,

we would have traded it in an instant for a more traditional lock-on system. Dropping into a gaggle of enemies can be a death sentence as you can quickly lose sight of the mob and be bitchslapped as you try to spread your pasting out evenly amongst them. You should definitely continue to approach this IP as a third-person shooter and to pick thugs off from a distance before you move in and make it personal.

The reason for this is primarily down to Sucker Punch introducing a bunch of super villains to keep you feeling out-numbered and on the back foot. Along with some recurring mini-boss fights against ice titans, there are one or two

gargantuan boss fights that are unlike anything seen in the series before. You also have to watch your back against some seriously potent fodder enemies, such as mantis mutants that follow

"Unleash localised thunderstorms and enough electrical-based death to make Emperor Palpatine get his cackle on"

you wherever you hide, redneck rocket snipers who constantly clip your wings and freakin' ice-powered mercenaries who murderise you with a nifty combination of AKs and near-invincible ice-shields.

Before we move on here: as an individual who is singularly obsessed with increasing his offensive capabilities, we found ourselves wondering. Why does Cole never use his own powers in conjunction with the many free RPGs and miniguns left lying about? It's not like the dude has a code of honour like Batman or anything. And it sure would make this third-person shooting a hell of a lot more easier if we could, you know, shoot something other than glorified static electricity at the people pooping caps at us.

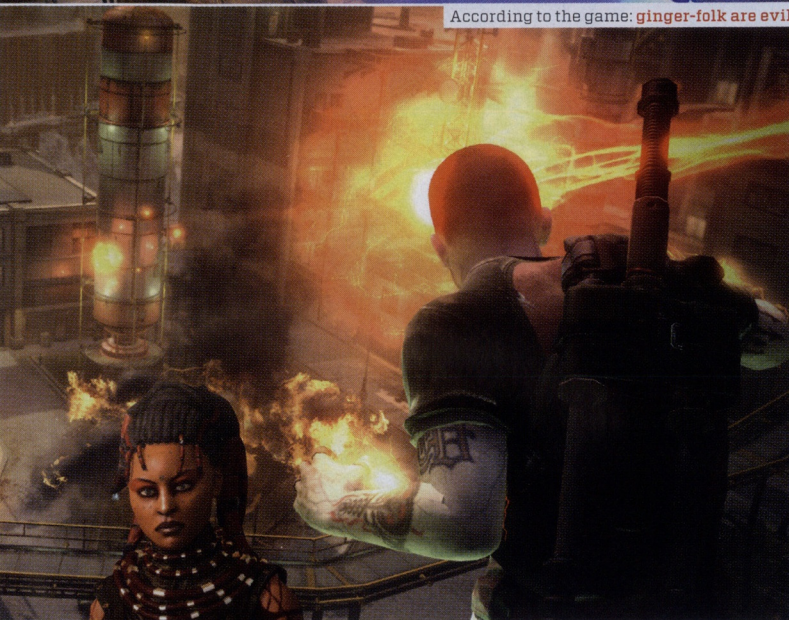
Just a thought.

Thankfully by the third act Cole is back to his über-offensive self as he earns a number of quick-selectable powers (electro-bullets/electro-grenades/electro-rockets/repelling blasts).

Some parts of the game can grind a little bit



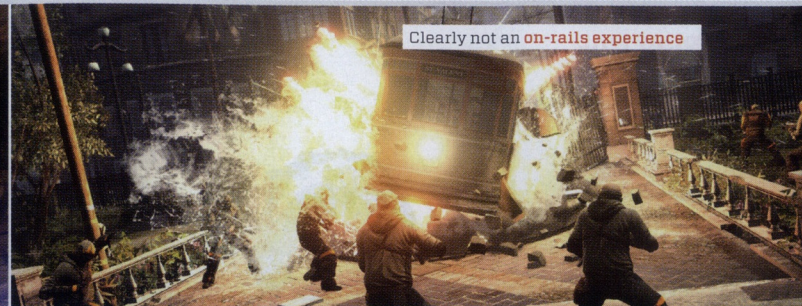
According to the game: ginger-folk are evil



Sucker Punch is to be praised for not doing the cheeseball 'and then you *lost all of your powers* at the start of this game' thing. A good deal of the best moves from the original are handed to you very early on, such as the ability to grind and hover. Put the time and effort in and the sky is the limit as Cole learns to unleash localised thunderstorms, cyclones and enough electrical-based death to make Emperor Palpatine get his cackle on. It's rare to find ourselves grinning after doing a screen-clearing move in a game but, thanks to the new destructive effects in *inFAMOUS 2*, that was a regular occurrence.

While *inFAMOUS 2* wasn't completely devoid of a bit of tedium here and there it's mission structuring kept the experience a lot more interesting than the original. Sure, you'll get the typical, take thing A to place B, kill jack-in-the-box enemy C. However, there are some moments that break the mission mould. Sometimes you're lighting up powerless sections of the city by launching controllable cruise missiles of electricity between one distant generator to another (whilst frying mobs of idiots who get in your way). Other times you'll need to keep a 'line grind' running for a while, or you'll undertake some light stealth as you do some photojournalism. Our personal favourite was having to punt a huge physical object from one end of town to the other, like a big lethal golf ball of fun.

Truth be told, if none of the inbuilt missions float your boat you needn't put up with it. *inFAMOUS 2* sports a UGC (User Generated



Clearly not an on-rails experience



As a man who can't abide water, we imagine peeing is a problem



Guess where its weakpoint is and don't win a prize

Content) system that seamlessly filters in mission challenges crafted by the most creative (or penis obsessed) players of the game. The toolset is surprisingly simple to use, offering you full access to the city and the ability to drop in virtually any obstacle/AI person/mission parameter imaginable. Sure, the creative opportunities aren't quite as endless as the mind-boggling *LittleBigPlanet 2*, but there's no denying that this has never been attempted before in a sandbox game. Bloody good show Sucker Punch; if only other developers had a similar, altruistic approach to how replayability should be handled.

At the end of the day there isn't too much criticism to be thrown at *inFAMOUS 2*. The worst we saw in it was that the sandbox civilians are dunderheads, some of the mid-bosses are repetitive and the voice actors can inexplicably switch their pronunciation of Bertrand, the antagonist's name (sometimes it's "Burt-rund", other times "Ber-tran"). Even still, those are little things that will niggle a very small portion of players. The majority of super-folk will be having way too much fun zapping away to care.

inFAMOUS 2 is an electrifying sequel that has risen to the challenge and bettered the series on every conceivable level. On top of this Sucker Punch has resisted the urge to throw in an utterly superfluous multiplayer mode in favour of an extremely versatile UGC system that'll ensure this game is constantly brimming with new content. It should come as no shock then that we label this must-buy material. **Adam Mathew**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Errs on the side of comic book chic rather than photo-realism and looks great because of it.

SOUND The occasional voice actor niggle. Otherwise fantastic power effect that make owning a subwoofer worth it.

CONTROLS Tighter than shrunken spandex. The mapping of powers makes perfect sense.

REPLAY VALUE Only *LittleBigPlanet* offers better solo replayability. Roll on your levels and hidden penis references!

Verdict

A super fun sequel. No shocks there.

9

**Play this
if you like**

Duke Nukem 3D, dick jokes

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

DEVELOPER: 3D REALMS,

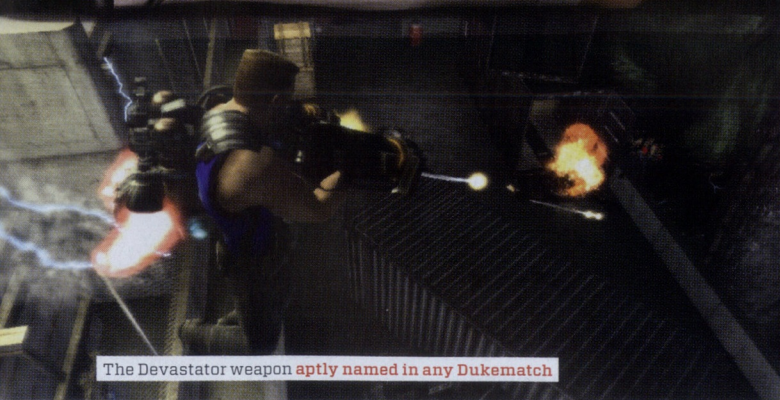
TRIPTYCH GAMES,

GEARBOX SOFTWARE,

PIRANHA GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-8

PRICE: \$109.95



The Devastator weapon aptly named in any Dukematch



Duke operates under Highlander rules: there can be only ONE

Ah yes, the old distract them with erotic statues while you explode their pancreas tactic. A true classic



Duke Nukem Forever

Never say never again

There's a rather telling moment immediately following your first boss encounter in *Duke Nukem Forever*. It's actually the very first encounter of the game; a battle between Duke and the Cycloid Emperor inside an abandoned football stadium.

Of course, what you're doing is reliving the final level of *Duke Nukem 3D* – but that's all part of the ruse. After annihilating ol' one eye, and punting his sole ocular appendage through the goalposts, the camera zooms out to reveal Duke's just been playing with himself. Duke's actually lazing about his 69th floor penthouse (finally) playing the videogame based on his Earth-saving 1996 exploits. You're playing as Duke *playing as Duke*. Meta.

The moment of note occurs after a pair of twins in matching school uniforms pop up like meerkats from below the frame. What they've been doing down in Duke's crotch is implied with all the subtlety of a high-speed headbutt but one of them eventually asks if the game is any good.

"Yeah, but after 12 f-king years it should be," grows Duke.

Thing is, it's been over 14 years since *DNF* was announced. When we combine this mathematical anomaly with our overall impressions of the game, the feeling that *DNF* is a game that was intended to be released several years ago (but instead spent another few years wedged in development hell) doesn't go away.

The developers have even included a bunch of bonus content – like old trailers and screenshots

– chronicling *DNF*'s "unique" development timeline (that you unlock by finishing the single-player campaign) that only strengthen the case. While it's clear the game *DNF* was at the turn of the century shares little in common with the game it is today, it's similarly obvious that *DNF* in its current guise really started shaping up as far back as 2005-2006. Browsing through these old assets you can see the stuff that has remained. *DNF*, as a result, suddenly feels more like a HD remake of a game that was never released five or so years ago.

We're focusing on the visuals because they're one of our biggest bugbears with the game. Graphics, we admit, are less important than robust gameplay – but the general presentation in *DNF* is significantly dated. At a glance the game seems passable; certainly lacking the crisp, triple-A sheen of the PS3's sexiest shooters but mostly acceptable. Look closer, however, and numerous wrinkles appear.

The lip-synching during the few occasions you're being spoken to by an NPC is diabolically bad and the supporting animations are basic at best. There's a glitch that causes some of the game's bloodstains to vanish and reappear like a dodgy fluorescent tube; it's distressingly common. Flying over Las Vegas in a dropship the cityscape looks horrific; a blocky, textureless relic from the Stone Age that makes even the four-year-old *Rainbow Six Vegas* look like a postcard.

Ancient art assets, like the kind you'd expect in a project well over a decade old, have

smuggled themselves into the game too. Some of them are particularly appalling and, worse still, it smacks of inconsistency. Why are the casino chips on one table properly modelled (low-detailed octagons admittedly, but discreet objects nonetheless) and on another they're a pixelated image on a 2D sticker stuck to the table? Why are posters of Duke completely unreadable on the top floors of the Duke's veritable palace but sharper and legible on the lower floors? This is not a pretty game; the opening level is really the best looking part. Graphical letdowns become so frequent you start to stop noticing them.

More disappointing than the visuals, however, is the game's identity crisis. Fusing new shooter tropes with the crusty but classic conventions of yesteryear hasn't worked. The result is a game that doesn't excel at being either cutting-edge or refreshingly old-school.

DNF replaces a health bar with an Ego bar that refills when not taking fire from enemies. Think of it like a shield. You can extend your Ego bar by interacting with various objects in the world: checking yourself out in the mirror, curling dumbbells, defeating bosses and more. It seems to work but it confounded us sometimes. Often we found ourselves surviving for long stints with our Ego bar fully depleted and other times were killed instantly despite part of our Ego bar still being intact. There are clearly some calculations going on under the hood that the game doesn't really educate you about enough.

A Brief History Of Ass-Kicking, Name Taking and Bubblegum Chewing

▼ DUKE NUKEM 1991



The original *Duke Nukem* was a two-dimensional platform game for PC. After the game's release Apogee became aware of a *Captain Planet* villain called Duke Nukem and renamed the 2.0 version of its game *Duke Nukem*. It turned out that Duke Nukem was not a registered name so Apogee registered it and used it in the sequels.

▼ DUKE NUKEM II 1993



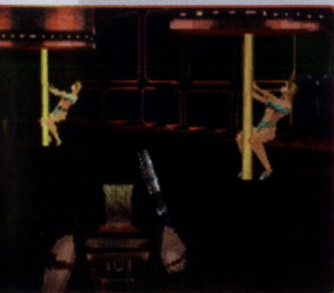
Also a two-dimensional platform game for PC this sequel was over four times larger than the original and took advantage of 256-color VGA graphics, MIDI music, and digitised sound. *Duke Nukem II* began to play on the cult of Duke, with a hilariously cheesy '80s movie opening sequence, but the real revolution was yet to come.

▼ DUKE NUKEM 3D 1996



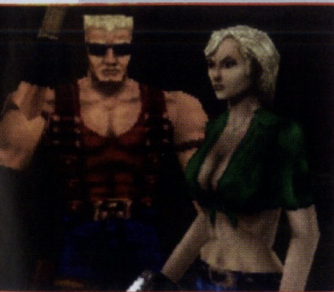
Released for MS-DOS, Mac OS, PlayStation, Sega Saturn, Nintendo 64 - and re-released on many other platforms - *Duke Nukem 3D* is one of the most respected first-person shooters in videogame history and the game where Duke Nukem was redesigned to become the hero he is today. It was one of the most controversial games of its time.

▼ DUKE NUKEM: TIME TO KILL 1999



A third-person action/adventure rather than a first-person shooter, *Time to Kill* shared more in common with *Tomb Raider* than *Duke Nukem 3D* - although it was actually pretty good at the time. Duke must travel through time (to the Old West, Medieval Europe and Ancient Rome) to prevent the aliens and pigs attempting to change history.

▼ DUKE NUKEM: LAND OF THE BABES 2000



This game was initially called *Planet of the Babes*. When Duke is interrupted at a strip club and transported into the future he's met by a woman - a member of the Unified Babe Resistance - who explains that in the future aliens have invaded earth, killed all the men and enslaved all the women. The UBR has sent for Duke to fight off the aliens.



Textures so good you'll want to go get your macular checked

The two-weapon limit, however, is far and away the most frustrating tweak. Why strangle one of the greatest arsenals in gaming with the two-weapon trend? It makes sense in hard-nosed, real-world military shooters but that's not *DNF*. If you want to hang onto Duke's trademark gold pistol you constantly have to swap weapons. It loses that cool, collectable aspect shooters of yore used to have. You can't squirrel away that rocket launcher for when you might need it; either use it now or leave it behind.

The list of problems with *DNF* continues. The frequent loading times blow chunks; 45-or-so seconds of loading after dying is hard to stomach. Enemy AI is serviceable but not

particularly snappy. Level design is linear but delights in bogging you down with extended encounters, difficult spikes and slightly unclear objectives. The beer, steroid and Holoduke buffs are underused to the point of irrelevance. We received just one Holoduke during the whole game and often went hours between picking up and using beer or steroids to amp up our toughness and increase our melee damage.

Without spoiling the paper-thin plot (kill aliens, save world), there is also one particular sequence we felt was hugely out-of-step with the overall tongue-in-cheek vibe of the game. Having a topless sex slave, bound by tentacles in an alien hive, crying and begging for her daddy is a

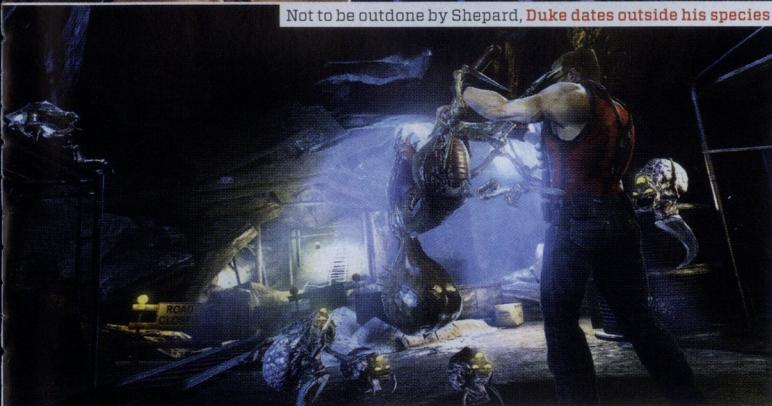


We're all up in your Duke Burgers makin' the bacon

Duke Nukem Forever showing off its Japanese design influences?



Not to be outdone by Shepard, Duke dates outside his species



seriously morbid downer in an otherwise over-the-top comedy splatterfest. Furthermore, having Duke not able to actually save any of these captured "babes" made him feel surprisingly impotent during this level. Duke should *never* be impotent. The Duke, as we understand him, is a ramrod of brutal action. That the game doesn't permit him to wrench these women out of sexual servitude with his bare hands seems truly out of character.

And yet there are glimmers of what could've been an absolutely great game underneath all of this. Duke's cache of weaponry is still amongst the game's best available; the Shrink Ray can't be topped and there's something about Trip Mines we love. The action may be twitchy, but it's fierce and tough. Like the old days you *do* get the feeling the game's trying to stop you from finishing it rather than falling over backwards to let you through unopposed. It's far lengthier than recent shooters too, weighing in at about 10-12 hours. The levels where you're shrunken are clever and creative. It's also very unpretentious; never once pretending it's anything more than a humble videogame.

It's got a better grasp of pop culture than most irreverent games of its ilk. See if you can find the *Inception*-inspired spinning top in the strip club dream sequence or guess the classic Westerns Duke is cribbing from while looking for fuel for his monster truck in the abandoned buildings of

"Your face, your ass - what's the difference?"



Morningwood: it's a hell of a thing, killin' a pig.

Finish the game and you'll unlock the kind of cheats the game industry forgot (invincibility, infinite ammo, instagib and big head mode) and a Duke Nukem soundboard we're itching to make a prank call with. This kind of stuff doesn't make up for *DNF*'s fundamental flaws but it certainly helps. At the very least *DNF* is the only game we've played where our solution for trying to kill a particularly tough giant tentacle brain is to chug a beer and just keep shooting.

It's a shame that the sequel to a truly genre-shaking game like *Duke Nukem 3D* is little more than an outclassed shooter with delusions of grandeur. That said, long-time gamers who look back on the '90s with fondness will likely be able to see past the inconsistent (and sometimes antiquated) visuals and become infected by the game's brash charm, at least temporarily. You certainly couldn't be blamed for doing so. Technical misgivings aside there is a lot of imagination on display here and, like any good belated sequel, *DNF* is cleverly engineered to gently caress your nostalgia gland until you're enjoying yourself.

It's not unplayable and, if you're going to play a mediocre shooter, you'd choose this over *Haze* every day of the week and twice on Sundays. It's true that there are plenty of superior overall shooters out there that'd murder for a character with a quarter of the charisma Duke Nukem oozes. He's a dinosaur; a two-dimensional mound of muscles with a gun. But that's the joke.

Then again, those of you who were two dates and a six-pack away from even being conceived in the early '90s will probably find it difficult to uncover the magic. It's not your fault; *DNF* really is a several-year-old game masquerading as a new release. For newer gamers, playing *DNF* is going to be like walking in halfway through a daggy joke and wondering why everyone older than you is chuckling. **— Luke Reilly**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Up and down. Mostly down. At its best it's passable. At its worst it's as ugly as a bagful of mole rats. The slick front end is packed with swagger but the in-game visuals let it down.

SOUND Jon St. John is clearly having fun here as Duke, and the theme song will still put biceps on your pubes, but there's not much else here to brag about.

CONTROLS Capable enough. Could've definitely done with just a little more console-friendly aiming assistance but we've played far worse.

REPLAY VALUE Single-player mode is longer than most shooters but it's unlikely we'll play this twice. We'll see if the multiplayer picks up.

Verdict

A flawed dinosaur of a first-person shooter. There's a lot of imagination on display here but the execution has let it down. Perhaps too many cooks really do spoil the broth?

5

Play this
if you like

Resident Evil 4, Killer 7

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION
ADVENTURE

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: GRASSHOPPER

MANUFACTURE

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$109.95

Shadows of the Damned

Contains dick jokes

We need to start this by going to the end. By the time you reach the final credits having slogged through more hours of silliness, references to videogames, fourth-wall breaking gags and wanton dick jokes than you can count, you'll realise that *Shadows of the Damned* is a tragedy with a capital 'T'.

Garcia Hotspur is a demon hunter who is part Antonio Banderas, part Danny Trejo and fully loco. He's a man with purpose, and means to extract revenge on every 'hellmonkey' that dares to get in his way.

Fleming, the lord of the underworld, has kidnapped Paula, the love of Hotspur's life. This six-eyed demon has only bad intentions for the blonde bombshell, and promptly takes this 'pretty peach' to his castle (videogame reference number one) so that he can kill her, bring her back to life and kill her again, and again. Hotspur follows him back to the underworld, taking with him Johnson

(dick joke number one), a smart-talking skull on a stick that also transforms into a pistol, shotgun and sub-machine gun. Oh, and a motorcycle.

Despite his bravado exterior, foul mouth, and zero hesitation in fully committing to what needs to be done – usually by blasting away on his weapons of choice – Hotspur elevates himself above the status of being one-dimensional with his unshakeable love for Paula. His life is infused with sadness.

We're talking like it's a minor masterpiece. It's not. To get to this final realisation you need to persevere through long stretches of repetitive, violent, bloody combat, and at times technically sloppy craftsmanship. Whether you think it's worth it though depends a lot on whether you care who Suda51 and Shinji Mikami are. For those with a furrowed brow, Suda51 is the bloke that made the cult hits *Killer 7* and *No More Heroes* while Shinji Mikami is widely considered to be the 'father' of



That's one shocking costume

Resident Evil, and was the executive producer on the sublime *Resident Evil 4*. Akira Yamaoka, famous for composing the music for most of the *Silent Hill* games, is *Shadows*' sound designer.

Despite this dream collaboration *Shadows of the Damned* feels very 2006, but most disappointingly like Suda and Mikami were walking on eggshells, neither really taking this project as their own or utilising each other's strengths to make the game shine. There's a constant sense that both would have wanted to push in one direction but the other respectfully disagreed. Rather than be bullish about it they compromised. Suda51 is renowned for poking fun at players, and we'll happily assume he provided the tone of the game while Mikami was responsible for the mechanics.

It plays a lot like *Resident Evil 4*: a linear action adventure with a tight, off-centre over-the-shoulder, third-person camera and contextual action button. One dedicated button opens doors, allows you to manipulate objects and most infuriatingly to jump over or down from objects. Why not just send Hotspur over instead of lumping the player with a prompt?

Standard action-game rules apply. Fallen enemies drop gems that can be spent on liquor,



This game shafts *Bulletstorm* to take the 'most wang puns' prize



Seabiscuit went the other way

Hotspur's life force. Alcohol in the underworld heals people – "it un-kills them" as Johnson puts it – so you'll need to keep a steady supply of hot sake, tequila and absinthe in your inventory. Though you'll find bottles of the stuff hidden in wooden crates and barrels – of course – along with ammo, there are carefully placed vending machines dotted around towns, caves and ghoulish locations to keep Hotspur well imbibed. Handily, a friendly half-demon, half-human (who reminds us of *Resi 4*'s Merchant) can also flog booze, ammo and upgrades when you chance upon him.

Shadows thrives when it comes to boss fights, as general skirmishes with regular enemies feel like you're swatting aggressive flies. Some are dumb, bumbling around arenas and decide to hug a wall while their identical cousin a few metres away will try to eat your face off. Other times their screeching attack patterns will set your nerves on edge as you swipe at them with Johnson as a flaming torch, before unleashing a 'sticky explosion' with the 'Hot Boner' gun on the tougher ones. We're not making this up.

The bosses, though, are amazing. Most of them are introduced by a story book that reads like a child's fairy tale, if they were full of sex and revenge. Each of these souls led a normal life but either due to character faults, fate or sheer bad luck they ended up in Hell, doomed to be punished by a dude with a death wish and some phallic weaponry.

You'll also be surprised by the inventive environments but only once you're about four hours in, by which time most players will have switched off and found something less repetitive

and seemingly dull. If you do stick with *Shadows* you'll discover a game that wants to be played as it pokes fun at the player, itself and other games and movies, and it even changes genre a few stages from the end.

In fact, it's towards the bitter finale that *Shadows* really lights up. Shooting demons is balanced out with some gentle puzzles that will make *Resi* fans smile and one of the final boss fights is truly epic.

Sadly, along with the lacklustre first half and unrelenting dick jokes you'll tire of the shoddy camera system and dull, short-sighted melee system. Sometimes you'll be pressed up against a corner with the camera rammed right over your shoulder – or even into the back of your head – with a gaggle of beasts smashing you (when they're not running into a wall).

Despite its faults we wanted to see just how ridiculous and inventive the lewd jokes could get, and while we laughed out loud it was often at the game rather than with it. We pressed on because we had to, but we also stuck with it as we were sure there'd be a mode to play through again with an upgraded Hotspur. As far as we could tell, you can't. So once you've played 11 hours of this you're done and won't return.

We're not entirely sure who's going to play this game, or even who it's ultimately suited for. People who are fans of Mikami and Suda will no doubt snap it up without a thought, and so will those who are tired of the 'usual' slew of action games. Sure, *Shadows of the Damned* has character and shows off incredible, grotesque and inventive beats, but as a game it's left lacking.

Paul Taylor



We play this for the particles

What's it like?

Shadows of the Damned is a cocktail comprised of...

15% Road movie

20% *Resident Evil 4*

15% Tragedy

50% Jokes about genitals

Final Say

PRESENTATION Great environments and inventive enemies – when you find them. Non-existent lip-synching wrecks it a bit.

SOUND Atmospheric, like a nightmare where you're having a heart attack made digital. Great voice acting.

CONTROLS Simultaneously streamlined and infuriating. Gunplay is tight but getting around can be a chore.

REPLAY VALUE As far as we can tell, you play it once for about 11 hours and that's it, as there's little incentive to play it all over again. A real let down.

Verdict

Smutty, weird, cool, emotional and yet pretty boring. For collectors of niche Japanese titles only.

7

Hear that? It's the sound of subtlety dying



We won't lie to you, adventurers. The way ahead **will be red**

Dungeon Siege III

Or, if you prefer, 'Curmudgeon Siege III'

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-RPG

RELEASE: JUNE 17

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDIA PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: OBSIDIAN

ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: \$109.95

**Play this
if you like**

Obsidian Entertainment

Gaming's come a long way since the original *Dungeon Siege* first debuted on the PC in 2002, an action-RPG from the mind of Gas Powered Games' founder Chris Taylor.

Taylor is somewhat of an industry Übermensch – you might remember him from such titles as *Total Annihilation*, and what that epic-scale strategy titan did for its genre, *Dungeon Siege* did for the slash 'n' loot movement. Arguably it would have done even more if Blizzard's *Diablo* hadn't predated it by a good six years, but while their gameplay mechanics rub shoulders, the two differ in scope and execution. Think of it like a cosy, party-based compromise between Blizzard's prodigal demonic son and BioWare's more traditional *Baldur's Gate*.

That middle ground ended up being a good place to be. *Dungeon Siege II* hit in 2005 and in 2008 Chris Taylor himself promised a true follow-up in the form *Dungeon Siege III*. Fast-forward three years, and here it is with *Fallout: New Vegas* boys Obsidian Entertainment at the helm. They know a thing or two about this RPG guff. What could possibly go wrong?

As it turns out, lots of things.

While Obsidian's reputation for buggy programming is thankfully (and surprisingly) not in effect, this is clearly a PC port. With that comes baggage: an unoptimised game engine and user-unfriendliness. The former rears its ugly head in odd moments of slow-down and when spoken dialogue cuts out abruptly and the next line begins in earnest; the latter is particularly obvious in *DSIII*'s control scheme. It's really crappy. Normally, this'd be bearable. You'd just jump into the options and change everything up to how you like it – except there are no controller customisation options.

The awkward default layout becomes a big deal in combat, and seeing as 99.9% of the game is devoted entirely to fighting – and quite frenetic fighting, at that – an already challenging proposition is made more so by virtue of all the wrong reasons.

To wit, your character's got skills. He or she will eventually have a lot of skills. Not only that, but each character's also got two different forms they can flick between during combat (one for dueling up close, and one for fighting at range or for managing crowds, depending on who you're playing as). Doing so is only a matter of pressing **[B]**, but combat itself is really sluggish and takes some getting used to.

Blocking, which is unintuitively mapped to the **[B]** trigger, is absolutely useless. The blocking animation takes too long to execute, your enemies strike too fast, and you can't interrupt your attacks or movement (pressing **[B]** while moving will cause your character to evade-roll, an altogether much better prospect because you're unhittable during) to do it. Seeing as you'll eventually acquire a whole bunch of essential buffs that require combinations like **[B]+[D]** and **[B]+[A]** to activate, things can get very unwieldy, very quickly.

Drastic difficulty spikes ahoy, you'll die a lot in a fit of fumbling when you probably shouldn't have. Compounding this is the fact you can't interrupt your attacks to change tack full-stop. Locked into a lethargic combo on a single goon with a wave of goons coming up behind you? Forget breaking out the crowd-control until you're done snail-impaling that goblin, chump.

For a game that competes so heavily



Maybe she's born with it – maybe it's **Necromancellene**



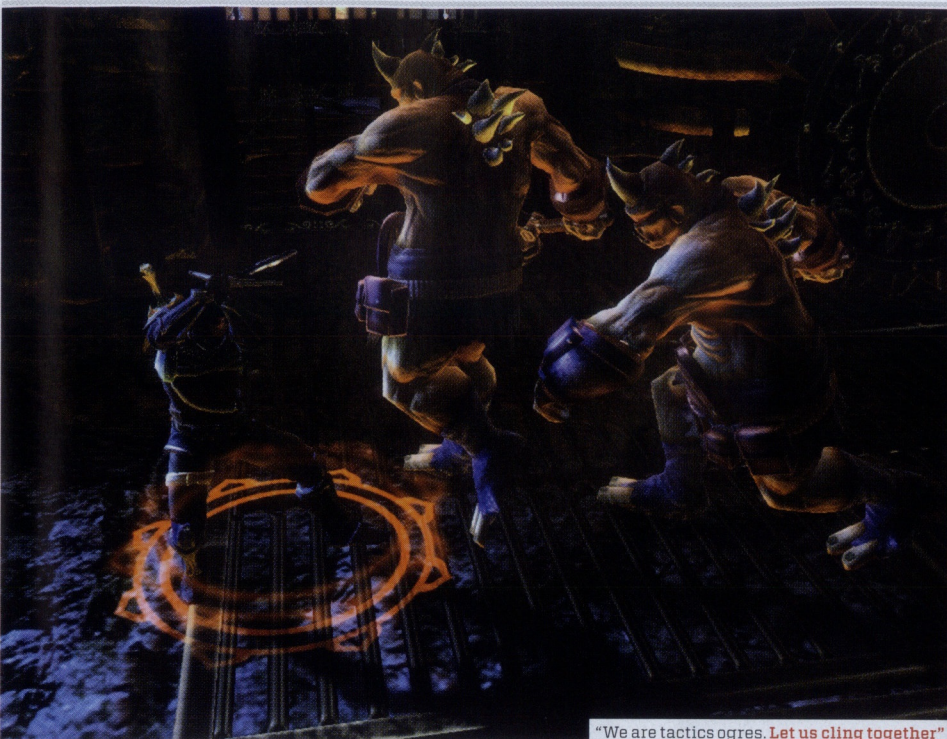
Like a bat out of some place made famous by **Meatloaf**



He's **fired**



Such flowerpower. **Settle petal**



"We are tactics ogres. Let us cling together"



Textbook 'shroom experience



Because some men in metal undies just wanna watch the world burn



"Short story: Christmas is cancelled. Yeah, I'm totally a wizard now"

with *Dragon Age* (curiously, the backstory of one of the main characters, Katarina, is suspiciously similar to Zevran's, right down to her accent), it's a wonder that not only can you *not* control any of your three other party members, but you can't even customise the behaviour of their AI. Granted, the AI is routinely solid and will even go so far as to pick up any treasure (but not items) that you might overlook, but if you've just recently spent hundreds of hours tweaking Anders into Kirkwall's most devastating mage in *Dragon Age II*, you're going to feel massively at a loss here.

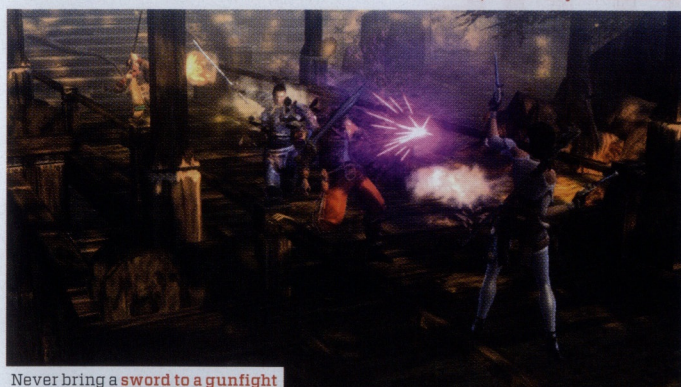
It gets even more backward. Obsidian have chosen to emphasise micro-management to the point where, because you find so much loot all the time, you'll constantly be stuck in the party menu screen outfitting your people with the latest and greatest wargear. This can be an insane time-vortex, because each character can simultaneously equip no less than nine different categories of armour, weaponry, and assorted accessories, and staying up-to-date is essential to staying alive. It's a shame leveling up wasn't handled with the same kind of attention to detail. All you can do when enough exp. comes calling is unlock Abilities, slightly tailor those Abilities with Proficiencies, and put a point into one of your largely redundant passive Talents.

It might be small compensation, but presentation is where *DSIII* really shines. Although somewhat of a Monet (for your eyes' sake, don't click R3 to get a closer look at the bland character models), the environments are strikingly vivid and vibin'. Happily, while series composer Jeremy Soule opted out (boo), *Red Faction: Guerrilla* maestro Tim Wynn's compositions are probably the highpoint of the entire thing (yay). Ridiculously evocative, they set a new benchmark for backing scores in gaming. If Square-Enix doesn't put out an official soundtrack for this baby, it's crazy.

Ultimately if you're able to embrace its many niggles, *Dungeon Siege III* can be some kind of flawed fun, but it is pretty difficult to recommend wholeheartedly – especially with word of a PS3 port for CD Projekt's epic and hugely well-received *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings* trickling out of E3 (indeed, the Polish studio is reportedly on the hunt for a PS3 developer to help make that happen right now).

Toby McCasker

"You'll die a lot in a fit of fumbling when you probably shouldn't have"



Never bring a sword to a gunfight



Say what you want, she has got a hot arse

In The Name Of The King: A Dungeon Siege

Yet another reason to wish director Uwe Boll an untimely demise. Very loosely based on Chris Taylor's pain-stakingly conceived fiction, this atrocity bombed so hard that the sequel – yes, Boll is making sequel, despite the universe begging him not to – is simply entitled *In the Name of the King: Two Worlds*. It's set to star Dolph Lundgren, and is about "an ex-Special Forces soldier who gets thrown back to medieval times to fulfill an ancient prophecy and ends up finding redemption." Jesus.

Final Say

PRESENTATION Dazzling from afar but a little shabby up close, keep your distance and you won't spew through your eyeballs.

SOUND Peerless orchestrations from Tim Wynn, although some of the voice-acting is god-awful (Anjali's, especially).

CONTROLS The straw that breaks this camel's back. Uncomfortable controls combine with the zombified pace of combat to annoy and frustrate.

REPLAY VALUE Co-op makes can be a modest ball and there are four characters to lurch through the main game with – but will you want to?

Verdict

An unlikely disappointment. Die-hards and massive RPG heads will persevere and enjoy it, but there are better alternatives already here – and even better ones on the way.

6

Play this if you like

American McGee's Alice, LSD

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPERS: SPICY HORSE

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$109.95

Madness Begins

Also included with each new copy is a download code for the original *American McGee's Alice*. We weren't able to test this with our review copy so we have little idea if it's good or not. It'd be a gamble to pick this up and make yourself like it before playing *Madness Returns*, though.

Alice: Madness Returns

Not the tea party you were expecting

Part platformer, part action game with more twists than in a '50s dancehall, *Alice: Madness Returns* has the on-paper DNA to be a videogame darling. Lewis Carroll's source material and the adventures of his heroine are redrawn in a black shade of dark by a developer who's determined to give the world his remix of a fantasy and create a game that plays on the expected.

Does it succeed? Not entirely. *Madness Returns* is as schizophrenic as the main lady herself, Alice Liddell, who is in a pretty bad way. She's haunted by the memories of her dead family (who burned to death in her family home) and the psychiatrist at the asylum she's a guest of is encouraging her to forget the past.

Alice's story begins by her being sent down to the main street to buy her own medication, and this short walk sets up the scene of London near the start of the 19th Century. It's a hard place, with thugs, pimps and brutal policemen on street corners, swearing, offering hard advice and coercing the next pretty lady to turn a trick. The game sends you down the proverbial rabbit hole pretty quickly, but this sequel to 2000's *American McGee's Alice* really feels like you've wandered into a conversation that's halfway through. We'll admit that we haven't played its prequel, due to it originally only being on PC. It's now a free PSN download for new purchasers of the game but it's still more than a decade old.

You need to be familiar not only with the franchise but reasonably intimate with the source material as well. Although you can get a brief recap of Alice's story as written by a tending doctor from the main menu, characters from the previous game and from the novel are thrust into the mix with little introduction as to who they are or how they integrate with Alice's life. It's hard to know which are friend or foe as her relationship with all of them feels like it could turn from tense pleasantries to murder in a heartbeat.

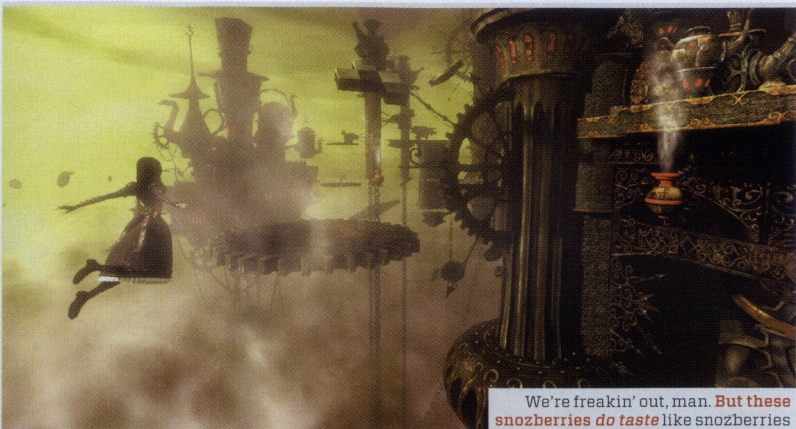
After a brief psychotic episode, Alice descends into Wonderland, dressed in a costume to inspire a thousand cosplay events. Wonderland is in Alice's imagination, and unlike the drab London streets Wonderland is a colourful escape – literally. However, it's a place that's in disrepair – and it's a violent one too. The Cheshire Cat meets you at the gate, and his superbly oily dialogue is in tone with the rest of the voice acting.

What *Madness Returns* does well is the spirit of its overall presentation, though the execution is lacking. It absolutely nails the motifs, delivering a thematically solid spin on Carroll's work that represents and reconstructs his universe. Environments have been well thought out artistically but you'll find a fairly dull game. Your time here is split up between mean-spirited platforming and carving up the swarms of enemies that bombard you at most turns, with the odd moment spent in the real world. When you're back here it's just a trip from point A to B and a relatively short beat away from the next trip into Wonderland.

It's pretty easy to admire Wonderland and, if you take a second to swing the right thumbstick around, you'll sometime be agog at how it looks



Whatever you do don't imagine waking up to find this cat watching you sleep. Too late?



We're freakin' out, man. But these snozberries do taste like snozberries



One good reason why *livin' next door to Alice* ain't all it's cracked up to be

— but the layout is more filler than killer. It takes too damn long to get anywhere as Alice jumps and glides over skinny platforms, and some corridors are devoid of anything to do but run through. Plus it contrasts dream-like settings with some pretty rough textures, making it feel about four years old. Along the way you'll also stumble on a few mini-games, quizzes, and battle arenas that provide some variety but they don't feel well-blended in to the experience.

Alice moves fairly swiftly and she's nicely modelled amongst the oddly proportioned citizens in the real world and Wonderland. There are a few cool enemies that take a good beating but these are battles of attrition. They're not that smart but their sheer numbers will challenge you. Alice herself isn't afraid of getting into a fight as you're armed with a mixture of melee and ranged weapons. You'll often curse as you're being attacked from all angles, and there are a few annoying foes that don't cause much damage but require immediate attention.

Despite this it's a very forgiving game. You're never far from health pickups, represented by flowers or oversized violets (that you have to shrink to get into), and death — whether it's from the splash of a scorching bolt of tea that's spat from a psychotic tea pot or just from plummeting into a gaming abyss — sends you back to the nearest checkpoint. If you do get down to your last speck of health you can enter 'hysteria', where Alice will scream, sending a shockwave and becoming invincible and super-powered for a brief stint. Sometimes it's the only way to defeat some of the bigger enemies.

There are a stack of nice touches. Alice's hair and costumes are noteworthy; as she glides down and runs around her long, thick mane either trails behind her or gets caught up over her face depending on which ways the wind blows. Her dress billows out as she descends from a double- or triple-jump and will alter depending on the stage.

Madness Returns is in a tricky position. It could never offer pistol-quick mechanics because of the character design and it often feels like a chore to finish a stage. You'll also probably get pretty tired of finding and shooting switches to reveal a hidden platform, or slogging through another round of five or six enemies. Yet it dares to be different, so if you're happy to admire it for its own sake then you should find some fun amongst the insanity. **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Wild landscapes, imaginative depictions of familiar characters, but very rough around the edges

SOUND Good voice acting though the effects are pretty basic.

CONTROLS Dead easy to grasp though some leaps require trial and error.

REPLAY VALUE It's a battle to get through once, so when it's done with you, you'll be done with it.

Verdict

As a game it's outclassed but as a concept and spectacle it's fun.

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THEY TOOK EVERYTHING FROM US

PS3

SONY make.believe

This boss fight *not* taken from actual Japanese history. If it was, there'd be way more tentacles

White Knight Chronicles II

Sword boy!

Play this if you like

Final Fantasy XIII,
any MMORPG

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RPG

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR:

SONY COMPUTER

ENTERTAINMENT

DEVELOPER: LEVEL 5/

JAPAN STUDIO

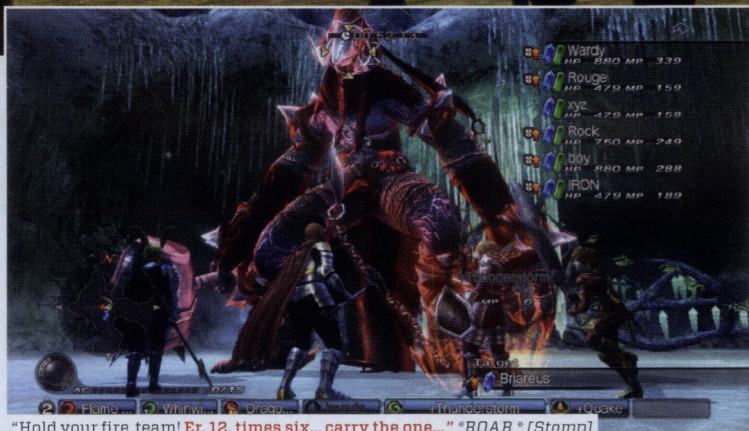
PLAYERS: 1-6

RRP: \$109.95

There seems to be a breeze blowing through the industry at the moment that whispers the traditional RPG no longer has its place. That previous titans of the genre like *Final Fantasy* should be cast aside to let the newer breed of action-based (dare we say it, western) RPG, à la *Dungeon Siege III* or FPS/RPG hybrids like *Fallout: New Vegas* and *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* lead the charge to revitalise the genre. This may carry a certain amount of weight in the western world, but there is a strong contingent that lives and breathes for these life-sucking entities.

There will always be a place for the JRPG simply because of the fanbase indicated in the very title of the genre. The "J" is for Japan and those inclined have a lot of love for *White Knight Chronicles* and its kin. It may not be raking in *Call of Duty: Black Ops* type figures but this very title sold nearly 200,000 copies in Japan alone in its first week.

One of the staples of this type of game is the mandatory 10-hour opening grind to acclimatise oneself with the title's nuances before anything really happens. *White Knight Chronicles II* differs from its brethren by giving you a leg up right from the start. If



you've finished the original, you can import your character, their abilities and most importantly, their kit so you're ready and raring to go. Newbies can either play through the original (see 'Two for one'), or kick off with a level 35 character to customise as much as you wish. It's a great idea and we're surprised that more sequels don't take this concept as gospel. It's great to actually hit the ground running for once.

The story won't win any awards for originality; it's the usual 'rescue the princess, defeat the big bad, save the world' type deal. Contrary to what you might think after starting the game with a character creation and abilities customisation section, you actually play the mantastically named lead, Leonard. The character you've created is actually a support avatar that will follow your journey as a party member.

They come into play in the multiplayer online mode called Georama where you create your own little town as a hub and can then join up with mates for some MMORPG-type fun. Initially we were a little pissed that we couldn't take direct

control of this avatar into the single-player campaign, but you can squirrel away items and slowly upgrade your avatar to become a force to be reckoned with online.

Combat operates a touch differently with you retaining freedom of movement during skirmishes. Your attacks are set on a timer that refills regardless of which ability you've previously used. With a bit of practice you'll be co-ordinating attacks like a champ and can even create combinations of moves to end a brouhaha post-haste. The enemy AI is still a little cheap, much like its predecessor, with them rarely missing a strike – though the same cannot be said for your party. Thankfully they don't milk it and the combat feels pretty well balanced in general.

There is also a deep crafting and upgrade system for weapons (which you can also break down into composite parts), a tonne of abilities and spells to choose from and you can assign your favourite attacks, magic and tactics to your party so they work to your battle plan on the fly. Commands can be 'hotkeyed' in lines to easily access your favourites, so you can set up one against regular

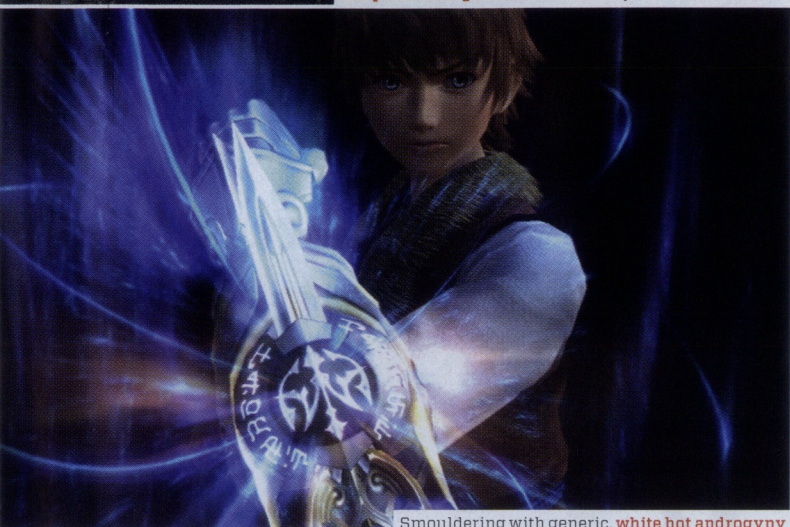
Two for one

For those of you that missed the previous version of *White Knight Chronicles* and wanted to get the skinny on the story, fret not. *White Knight Chronicles II* comes with the original bundled up in the package. After the lengthy install of the game you can choose to either pick up from *White Knight Chronicles II* kicking off with a level 35 character, or jump back and start the adventure anew. Level 5 is certainly giving you more RPG bang for your buck with the best of both worlds at your fingertips.





"30 seccooooonds! **Keep the sand out of your cravats. Keep that hair gel clear** and I'll see you all on the beach"



Smouldering with generic, **white hot androgyny**

enemies or one specialising in elemental attacks without wading through hundreds of different options (and yes, the combat is that deep).

By now, you're probably wondering where does the "White Knight" of the title fit into the scheme of things? Well that bad boy (also known as an Incorruptus) is accessible by Leonard, working much like a the behemoths 'summoned' in *Final Fantasy*. Once bonded with a soul they release immense power and can be called on pretty much anywhere (your avatar also has a customisable Incorruptus at their disposal in Georama). Unsurprisingly, the douchebag you're after, Graze, also has access to one of these, as does his second in command, taking up the mantle of the Black Knight defeated in the first outing. Needless to say, there's going to be a whole lot of armoured battles to wade through before you reach Journey's end.

The graphics do leave a little to be desired in comparison with other JRPG efforts, yet they are in keeping with the original so we'll cut Level 5 some slack. Where *White Knight Chronicles II* (and the franchise in general) does stand out from the crowd is the magnificent accompanying score and extremely solid voice over work. Usually the English-dubbed track is slapped together with some sickly sweet high-pitched tones and emotionless warriors filling out the cast. The subtle musical cues really reinforce the epic tone, as does the robust vocal talent. You truly feel part of something larger than yourself and Level 5 should be commended for the effort.

All in all *White Knight Chronicles II* is a solid dose of JRPG that is sure to sate that level grinder within us all for dozens on hours on end, and when you're done, you can jump online and take it for a spin. **Dave Kozicki**

Final Say

PRESENTATION There are occasional jaggies and overall the visuals are a shade dated.

SOUND Epic score really sets the tone, as does the exceptional voice acting.

CONTROLS Not bad but there are some definite camera issues.

REPLAY VALUE Jumping online with five mates should add a little longevity to this RPG.

Verdict

Sitting somewhere between a hack and slash action-fest and an RPG, this is a serviceable addition to the franchise, just don't expect it to knock your socks off.

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BUT NOW IT'S TIME TO TAKE IT BACK...

PS3, PS2, PSP, PS4, PS5, PS6, PS7, PS8, PS9, PS10, PS11, PS12, PS13, PS14, PS15, PS16, PS17, PS18, PS19, PS20, PS21, PS22, PS23, PS24, PS25, PS26, PS27, PS28, PS29, PS30, PS31, PS32, PS33, PS34, PS35, PS36, PS37, PS38, PS39, PS40, PS41, PS42, PS43, PS44, PS45, PS46, PS47, PS48, PS49, PS50, PS51, PS52, PS53, PS54, PS55, PS56, PS57, PS58, PS59, PS60, PS61, PS62, PS63, PS64, PS65, PS66, PS67, PS68, PS69, PS70, PS71, PS72, PS73, PS74, PS75, PS76, PS77, PS78, PS79, PS80, PS81, PS82, PS83, PS84, PS85, PS86, PS87, PS88, PS89, PS90, PS91, PS92, PS93, PS94, PS95, PS96, PS97, PS98, PS99, PS100, PS101, PS102, PS103, PS104, PS105, PS106, PS107, PS108, PS109, PS110, PS111, PS112, PS113, PS114, PS115, PS116, PS117, PS118, PS119, PS120, PS121, PS122, PS123, PS124, PS125, PS126, PS127, PS128, PS129, PS130, PS131, PS132, PS133, PS134, PS135, PS136, PS137, PS138, PS139, PS140, PS141, PS142, PS143, PS144, PS145, PS146, PS147, PS148, PS149, PS150, PS151, PS152, PS153, PS154, PS155, PS156, PS157, PS158, 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**Play this
if you like**

Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: INXILE

PLAYERS: 1-2

RRP: \$109.95

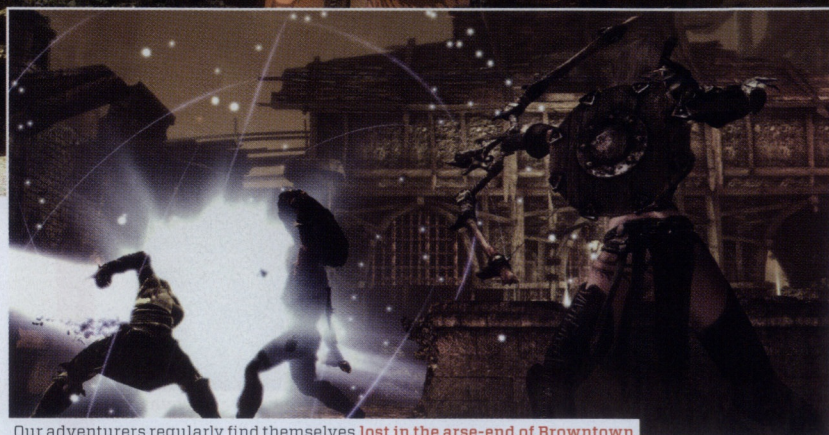
Hunted: The Demon's Forge

It's like stepping in to a straight-to-video fantasy flick

In a recent episode of *South Park*, young Stan finds himself afflicted with the crippling disease of cynicism – everything in his life that he once enjoyed now seems like crap. Parker and Stone portrayed this by laying fart sounds over popular music, and by making it seem to Stan that everyone else emitted explosive diarrhoea out of their mouths whenever they spoke.

We all know Stan's hell; all too often, the biggest objection voiced against a new game is that 'it's all been done before.' On the face of things, *Hunted* should be a cynic's nightmare, for it is a linear third-person action game assembled from middleware. Yet this Frankengame has been stitched together with enough attention to detail to ensure that you barely notice the seams.

Hunted is designed from the ground up to be a co-op action game; even when flying solo, both its cynical anti-heroes are in play. The point man of this dynamic duo is Caddoc, a bald and tattooed berserker type with a lower-class English accent, a chip on his shoulder, and an irrational fear of spiders. Picture Jason Statham if he were a foot taller and could enunciate his words properly. Backing up our Cockney scoundrel is E'lara the archer, a posh-sounding Elf in leather fetish gear. While her virtual physique isn't quite on a par with the *Dead or*



Our adventurers regularly find themselves **lost in the arse-end of Browntown**

Alive girls, she has visible breast jiggle and her loincloth flaps about as she moves, giving tantalising partial glimpses of her naughty bits.

The character models of both have been meticulously designed and animated, and whichever one you're controlling takes up a good portion of the screen. Everything else has been laid out in such a way as to distract the player from the games limitations. Barricades, collapsed buildings, locked doors, and other assorted impassable obstacles corral one through a highly linear course. There is a limited amount of exploration and environmental puzzle-solving but very little back-tracking – every so often our mixed-race fantasy strike team will have to simultaneously jump down a ledge, cross a balance beam, or lift a heavy door to move forward, effectively drawing a line under their progress. These checkpoints,

combined with the recurring enemy types and poo-brown environmental textures, suggest that the coders at inXile found themselves constantly banging their collective heads on memory limits.

Their solution was to present the player(s) with a series of discrete biff challenges as they move from courtyard to cavern; each zone will have a few fixed barricades of chest-high cover; you can stick to cover with a button tap, popping up intermittently to let loose with ranged attacks. Alternatively, you can run up and face the goblins and giant spiders head-on.

Mana fuels magic spells and attack power-ups, each accessible once a certain amount of collectible crystals have been accumulated, and spent on making your skill tree bloom. Both Caddoc and E'lara have access to the same trio of basic spells, while each can also upgrade their primary weapons: exploding or ice arrows for E'lara, knock-back effects for Caddoc, etc.

Arrow refills and health and mana potions are scattered liberally between these melee segments; the meat of the game lies in the cover-to-cover action sections. Most cover-based shooter clichés are present; there are exploding barrels, and even the occasional gun emplacement ('ballista').

There are no bottomless item pouches in *Hunted*; at any time your selected character can carry one ranged weapon, one melee weapon, and one shield. On the rare occasions that a defeated foe's weapon doesn't vanish, and instead becomes a glowing icon that you can walk over, a simple numerical comparison will pop up. *Hunted* has its merits but stat wonkery is not one of them; an impulsive decision on which weapon to keep is as good as any other.

Do you believe in magic?

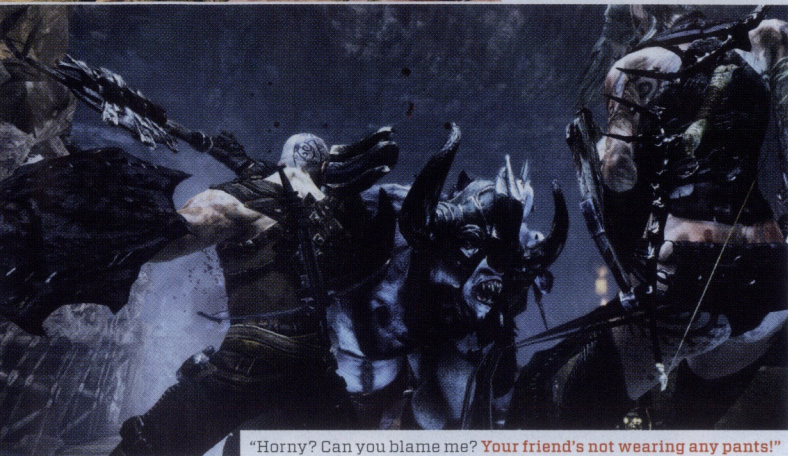
Blue crystals accumulated in the course of play can be spent on a variety of magical upgrades, granting your edgy leather-clad anti-heroes the ability to cast Brimstone, the Sigil of Pain, or Dragon's Breath (electric blasts, oddly enough). But by far the most useful spell is cast by clicking in the left analogue stick; this creates a spectral, Tinker Bell-like trail that shows you the way forward. For while the levels are linear, they are dark, dank, and re-use most of their textures and objects. It's all too easy to get completely disorientated.



One look at E'lara and **the tree grew extra wood**



Cool guys don't look at explosions



"Horny? Can you blame me? Your friend's not wearing any pants!"

In the single-player mode you'll periodically come across a glowing purple artefact that lets you swap between the two characters; these are the only occasions when you can do so. Like the changes in setting and pace, this option has been included less for tactical effect, and more as a means of keeping things fresh, like swapping over to the cool side of the pillow on a torrid summer's night.

The basic format of *Hunted* is solid, and entertaining, but there are flaws. Even on the maximum gamma correction settings, everything looks way too dark. This makes it difficult to identify and target enemies against the background, and in turn makes combat more complicated and stressful than it really needs to be.

What about quests? There aren't any. It's all just one long, linear slog. The protagonists receive mysterious visits periodically from a demonic-looking sorceress lady, but these intermissions are cut-scenes, not opportunities to role-play. To neutralise any critical thoughts before they can coalesce, *Hunted* employs a trick favoured by cheesy B movies since time immemorial: humour. While going through the motions of world-saving heroics, our murderous odd couple don't take their quest remotely seriously; at around the tenth time they come across a loading screen hidden by a weighty portcullis, E'lara declares "I'd like to find whoever built all these doors and kick them in the throat!"

The vaguely Celtic background music is enhanced by atmospheric sound effects, and the voice acting is engaging. Yet the high production values are often ruined by infuriating bugs; the code that senses when you're standing over an item you can pick up is a little screwy, and sometimes you'll need to run around over the same spot for a bit for the option to light up.

In general, you don't buy B movies. You rent them. Were *Hunted* a relatively cheap downloadable game, or sold in stores at a budget price, it would represent excellent value. But it isn't, so it doesn't.

The quality of the solo and co-op experience doesn't even come close to, say, *Portal 2*. Rent, borrow, or beg. Decent, but hardly an essential purchase. **James Cottee**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Slick character design and animation. Action movie pacing is light on the story, and heavy on the biff.

SOUND Unremarkable but solid music and effects. High-quality voice acting and great use of incidental sounds.

CONTROLS Rugged third-person action but slightly sticky cover and item recognition. Passable.

REPLAY VALUE Bauble collecting on a highly linear course might be worth a second run with a co-op buddy. Maybe.

Verdict

A third-person shooter in D&D cosplay. Generic, yet solid. Best in co-op.

7

YOU ARE THE RESISTANCE



RESISTANCE 3

PRE-ORDER NOW
08.09.11

EB GAMES

JB HI-FI

GAME

Harvey Norman

Check the Classification



PS3

PlayStation 3

SONY

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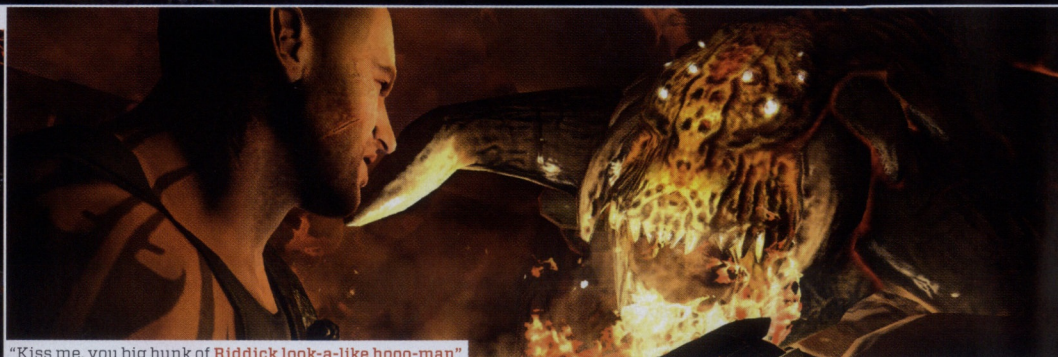
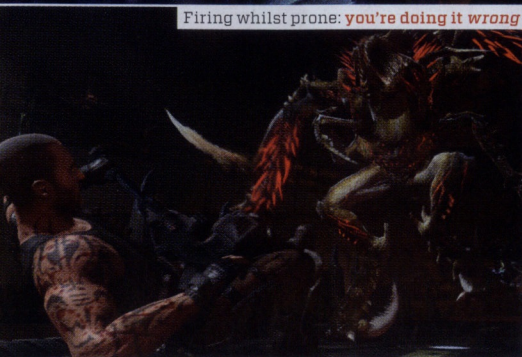
Red Faction Armageddon

Get your ass under Mars



Eight barrels? Miss and your gaming license is null and void

Firing whilst prone: **you're doing it wrong**



"Kiss me, you big hunk of Riddick look-a-like hooo-man"

Play this if you like

Red Faction: Guerrilla

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: VOLITION, INC.

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: \$99.95

Hammer time? No longer

The Nano-Forge returns and has been incorporated with a function that reverses any and all destruction dealt to man-made objects. The Nano-Forge also features an ability known as Impulse, which discharges an incredibly powerful burst of force. This makes your sledge quite obsolete.

Before we begin; a paradox. How do you destroy the concept of destruction? With *Red Faction: Armageddon*, Volition offers you multiple answers to the riddle.

You could achieve it figuratively by inserting a cool Nano-Forge ability in your game that lets the player insta-rebuild any shanty they've made slanty. Or you could do it literally, by defying common-sense and shoe-horning down a smash-tastic sandbox (*Red Faction: Guerrilla*) into what is primarily a claustrophobic corridor shooter. To add insult to that injury, you'd also restrict the player to manipulating only man-made structures, and not let them burrow through natural rock (something your franchise perfected way back in 2001).

Those were our very first impressions of *Armageddon* and they proved to be a little unfair. Nobody likes change. But much like the ghetto air on Mars, after prolonged exposure to this we couldn't help but breathe *Armageddon* in and get a little infected in a slightly different way.

The new protagonist, Darius Mason, is a compelling fugitive who is the fallguy for a bunch of Martian cultists who have unleashed an underground alien scourge. The follow on from that is a swarm of beasts zinging about like greased lightning which in turn makes for run 'n gun battles that are more exciting than *Guerrilla*'s gunplay. Indeed a lot of the tension comes from the simple removal of the cover system and the tightening of the camera to shoulder-view.

There's also the matter of the arse-kicking equipment to consider, which includes a cache of beefed up variations on *Guerrilla*'s greatest hits.

Most notably Darius has access to an unlimited ammo magnet gun that has the ability to hurl large chunks of metal across vast chasms. Squirreled salvage points will earn you Force power-style skills, such as shockwave stasis attacks and supercharges. You'll also get to continue Darius' (fairly mindless) alien genocide from the cockpit of a small handful of mechs.

In addition to the moderately entertaining, eight hour campaign, *Armageddon* offers a decent collection of score-based challenges in Ruin mode. This is a race against the clock as you and your mates smash as much stuff as you can in five maps that are about as 'sandbox expansive' as a tray of kitty litter. Your posse can also engage in Infestation, which is essentially a 30 wave king-of-the-hill challenge against enemy AI. Both diversions offer some kicks, but we can't see them being played for more than a few hours at most.

Guerrilla favoured explorative freedom, sidequests and the thrill of bombing around, finding something gargantuan, and then levelling it. The majority of that dynamic is gone. What remains is a linear, fairly been-there-done-that shooter that's traded a lot of its emergent fun for a never-ending stream of triggered alien assaults.

Armageddon is by no means a bad game, it's just a completely different one to what series fans will expect, or possibly want. Unfortunately, in returning to its underground roots, Volition has forgotten to capitalise on what their series does best: geo-modding the crap out of everything in sight – minimum restrictions. The end result of that misstep is a game that may damage the lineage.

Adam Mathew

Final Say

PRESENTATION Visually sharp, but how interesting can you make a series of dark caverns. Really?

SOUND Nothing here stands out as being particularly amazing or terrible. Capable stuff.

CONTROLS Darius does his dance of death with aplomb. His jumping skills are wanting.

REPLAY VALUE A shortish campaign can be made longer by a New Game Plus mode and some challenges.

Verdict

Not the game we would have made, but enjoyable enough to warrant getting your ass to Mars.

7

Mortal Kombat

A bloody good time that isn't krap



Play this if you like

Tekken

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FIGHTING

RELEASE: NOW

(NOT AVAILABLE IN AUSTRALIA)

DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS.

DEVELOPER: NETHERREALM

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: N/A

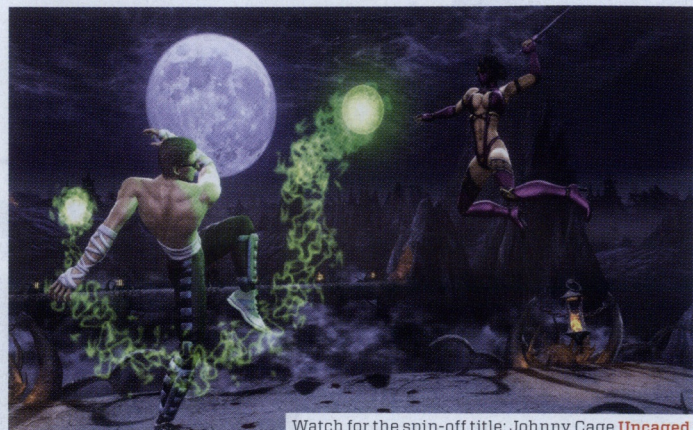
We feel like we're reviewing forbidden fruit. *Mortal Kombat*, banned in Australia because it doesn't fit into our archaic classification system, is legal to own except in Western Australia. You can't buy it here though. One trip to the States and \$65 later and we're wincing as one fighter's leg is bent in a way that limbs just shouldn't bend.

Give yourself five minutes and you'll be astounded at the amount of blood and gore you've spilled but also laughing at its sheer ridiculous nature. Violence as entertainment is often taken for granted, but presented like this and you can see that it's sheer fantasy.

It's definitely not for kids, though.

Mortal Kombat feels very familiar and harks back to its roots (for better or worse). If you played the original back in 1992 (or its sequel in 1993) you have the basics down pat but you'll be astonished by just how fast it feels. It totally outpaces *SSFIV* but doesn't match the bedlam in *Marvel vs. Capcom 3*.

Where most fighters fall down is their lack of single player content. *MK* is brimming with challenges for soloists. The story mode is the



Watch for the spin-off title: Johnny Cage **Uncaged**

best way to meet the game's cast and, while the story's hammy and ridiculously overacted you'll enjoy this good five or so hour journey.

There's also a standard tournament of 10 fights, a truly teeth-gritting challenge ladder comprised of specific tasks, as well as a tag-team ladder where you and another fighter take on two foes. On your way you earn Koinas to spend at the Krypt, where you'll unlock extra costumes, more fatalities, artwork, music and so on.

The cast is comprehensive. 27 fighters plucked from the franchise's 17 year history, plus Kratos. He has a few signature moves and NetherRealm have nailed his look and presentation, though he's missed a few ranged moves, and feels clunkier than we'd like. He's not the only unbalanced star here.

Some characters are blessed with a litany of really killer and exploitative moves, able to zip around arenas with ease, while some are left languishing with a comparatively small move set and require a lot of work to really shine.

Yet we're hooked. We've sunk more time in this than the gorgeous *Marvel vs. Capcom 3*, and we're likely to keep going. There's a tonne to do, it's a riot with friends and we're still learning the punishing combos – it's a remarkably deep and very rewarding system. While it's not worth being banished from the Garden of Eden, this is begging for you to take a bite. **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Polished. Mostly gorgeous models, and backgrounds that are full of life. Fatalities rule.

SOUND Truly booms. Turn it up loud if you can, and the voice acting's solid too.

CONTROLS Lighting fast combos, though getting some special moves out is a farce.

REPLAY VALUE Stacks to do if you're playing alone, and even offers a four-player mode. We like.

Verdict

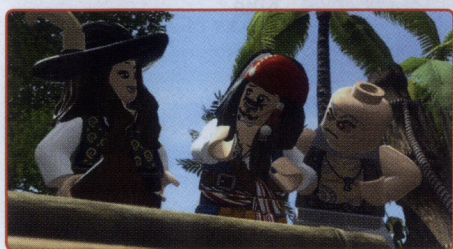
As a piece of entertainment it succeeds.

As a fighter, well, it's pretty damn good.

8

The fine print

It's permissible to own an RC videogame in Australia provided you are not going to sell it. Additional clauses vary from state to state. The exception is Western Australia, where the Classification (Publications, Films, and Computer Games) Enforcement Act 1996 explicitly forbids possession of RC videogames under threat of a \$10,000 fine. We have been unable to trace any examples of this law being ever enforced. Technically, material that has been classified RC cannot be imported into Australia. Under subregulation 4A(1A) of the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956, RC games are 'objectionable goods'. These types of goods may be seized by Customs. That said we are aware of many, many cases of *Mortal Kombat* being imported into Australia without issue. Reports earlier last year regarding a maximum \$110,000 fine for importing *Mortal Kombat* are misleading. This fine is applicable to persons importing 25 or more copies, or any number of copies for commercial purposes.



LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE

RELEASE: NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ

DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES **PLAYERS:** 1-2

In *LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean* developer Traveller's Tales sing the same old sea shanty. As Captain Jack Sparrow and co. you must build your way across four insanely popular Disney films, switch characters to solve puzzles and try to collect more studs than a he-pimp.

The formula changes can be counted on one LEGO claw hand: Sparrow has a compass that starts mini-treasure hunts, the sword play is smoother and you can fire cannons. That's pretty much it.

Not revolutionary but LEGO landlubbers will lap it up.

Verdict Solid, packed to the gills with that patented LEGO humour, but a bit too samey.

7



MX vs. ATV Alive

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** RACING **RELEASE:** NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ **DEVELOPER:** RAINBOW STUDIOS

PLAYERS: 1-12

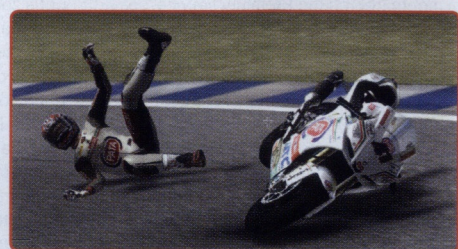
Want a motocross game with a hefty career mode, a huge variety of minigames and challenges, *plus* a hidden stuntplane? Get *MX vs. ATV Unleashed* for PS2.

The anorexic *MX vs. ATV Alive*, this budget-priced latest addition to the series, has none of this.

It's the unlock structure that grates. You'll begin with two national tracks and you can't touch the others until you reach level 10 (you earn XP for completing events). With no career mode, just single races to constantly repeat, this gets old fast.

Verdict Feels decent but all the content and charm the series used to have seems gone forever now.

5



SBK 2011

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** RACING **RELEASE:** NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: AFA **DEVELOPER:** MILESTONE

PLAYERS: 1-16

Career mode in *SBK 2011* is very similar to the one in *SBK X*. Successful race weekends earn you reputation points and the attention of bigger teams. It hasn't really been expanded upon since last year so it may feel a little hollow. There is a new Challenge mode that'll keep you busy outside of this though.

The handling's been massaged and made a little more manageable but *SBK 2011* now offers only three blanket options for assists. Previous games have let you individually turn off various assists.

Verdict The better bike game around. The inclusion of bonus past SBK legends is also a plus.

7

internet

NEWS, DLC,
REVIEWS

▶ WHAT'S NEW

PSN DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

Just because *Modern Warfare 3* is inbound doesn't mean that *Black Ops* will cease to be supported. Four new multiplayer maps and a fresh zombie map are going to be released for the biggest shooter in the world.

The pack's called *Retaliation*, and the maps are Hangar 18, Silo, Drive-In, and Hazard. The zombie map, Shangri-La, will be much tighter than that in *Annihilation*. The pack will be released on July 28, but we're anticipating that PlayStation owners will get it late August. This will be the third map pack for the game, the same amount of add-on content given to stablemates *World at War* and *Modern Warfare 2*.

Android phone users can now download the Music Unlimited app to their device. The service has been available on PS3 and other Sony home entertainment devices and PC for a few months but this is the first part of rolling the service out to portable devices. Music Unlimited uses your existing PSN login details to give you access to more than seven million music tracks that you can either stream like a radio station, or store in the cloud library. Cleverly, it also recommends music based on your listening habits. New users also get a month free on the Premium service, so if you've never logged in you can find the icon in the 'Music' icon of your PS3's XMB.

Capcom is putting the finishing touches on its new (but old) version of *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online*. According to Capcom honcho Christian Svensson, this is the team's "highest budget digital title [they've] done." The game will offer a slew of options for how you want to play, from the way the game looks to the way it's played. For the



Akuma: he burns for you

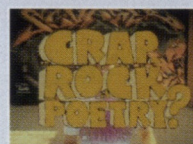
hardcore, it's running on the 'Version A' of the arcade board and you'll be able to alter various aspects of the mechanics, from whether you want air parrying on or off, to guard damage enabled, and a whole host of game-shaping options that will either leave your head either spinning like a top or dribbling with joy.

Children of the '80s, ready your one-button joysticks. *Choplifter*, the side-scrolling shoot-and-rescue-'em-up, is coming back to PSN in a HD version, called, well, *Choplifter HD*. While the game's created with 3D models you're still locked into a 2D viewpoint, and you need to fly into dangerous situations to collect civilians or military personnel and take them back to your base. The premise is simple, but of course there's only limited space on your chopper and you'll also have to take out a zombie infestation. Yes, really.

Finally, a snippet for *Mortal Kombat* owners (we know you're out there). A bunch of new characters are about to hit whatever PSN Store you're not really meant to be joined up to. Skarlet, a brand new fighter, is available right now, and Kenshi and Rain will follow in the coming weeks. Download Skarlet and you'll also unlock a bunch of alternate costumes for other fighters – a flawless victory. See you online.

VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: Happy Birthday Vidzone



THE RAPTURE - WHOO! ALRIGHT - YEAH... UH HUH

It might be raining outside but this Rapture clip will get you in the mood for summer.



MC HAMMER - U CAN'T TOUCH THIS

Hammer won stacks of awards for this track and it netted him millions of dollars. All of it spent on parachute pants.



KISS - CRAZY CRAZY NIGHTS

It's not the best song of the '80s but it is the most shocking video, in the days before the lads wore make-up.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available **free** on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!



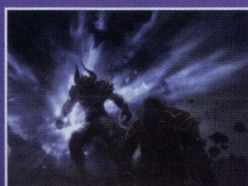
PlayStation®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



SSFIV - ARCADE EDITION

Like getting a brand new game for less than \$25. This hefty update gives you four new characters and a bunch of new improvements, and additions to the online modes too.



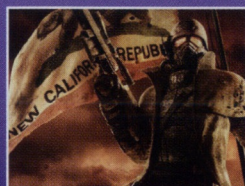
CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

This single-player expansion to Konami's joyous action game continues the story after the end of the main game and also features a rather large boss battle. Fans will dig it.



RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

Probably one of the best *Ridge Racers* on the original PlayStation, it still holds up today. If you're looking for a challenge we dare you to collect all the cars and get the Pac mobile.



F.N.V. - HONEST HEARTS

Offering a wide open area to explore, as well as a new enemy type and new weaponry, this isn't as sound as *Dead Money* but still a solid way to spend your time and coin.



VIRTUA TENNIS 4 DEMO

This is a demo of the World Tour mode from the latest in SEGA's franchise. If you like it you can keep your XP and transfer it to the main game. We think you will, because we did.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®Network

GENRE: ACTION RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR DEVELOPER: TEAM BOND! PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$17.95 (ROCKSTAR PASS)

DLC >

L.A. Noire - Rockstar Pass

Access all areas

Rockstar has unveiled its DLC plans for *L.A. Noire*. Besides the "Nicholson Electroplating" Arson case (out now) there's also a Vice case, "Reefer Madness", coming out on July 12. Both of these were able to be pre-ordered at a discount price as part of a package that also provides access to all of the currently-available DLC.

That package is called the *L.A. Noire Rockstar Pass* and it offers up to a 50% discount on the regular price of its seven *L.A. Noire* DLC packs. Four of those will be new cases, each of which would normally cost \$6.95 a piece. Another two of the cases are the previously available pre-order bonus cases ("The Naked City" Vice desk case and "A Slip of The Tongue" Traffic desk case), along with with some other weapons and suits content.

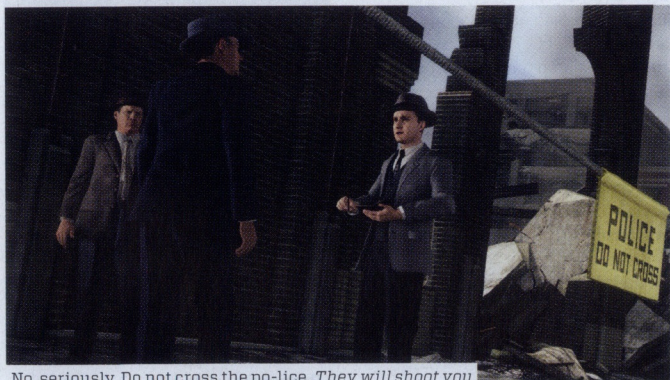
All this swag is included, so it's not as if purchasing the pass gets you nothing until the new cases arrive.

At \$17.95 the *Rockstar Pass* strikes us as a pretty clever idea from the publisher's perspective. By offering it early in June for 50% off the normal price it encouraged players to scoop it up while they were still hooked and, because part of what they're paying for won't be available until July, that'll help ensure that early adopters won't be hocking their copy anytime soon.

At any rate, "The Naked City" is a particularly cool case. It's a lengthy investigation that bolsters the game's somewhat brief Vice desk considerably. It also gives players more insight into Phelps, which is welcome.

VERDICT

The suits don't strike us as amazing must-have deals. The prospect of extra cases are high on irresistible



No, seriously. Do not cross the po-lice. They will shoot you



GENRE: RACING RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS PLAYERS: 1-8 RRP: \$109.95

Multiplayer >

DiRT 3

Get down and DiRTy with strangers

First up, the money-grubbing disclaimer: Codemasters has employed a VIP code system for online play, which you need in order to play competitively online. So yeah, second-hand buyers beware.

DiRT 3's multiplayer game modes vary between traditional rallying events and the more sideshow car-nival stuff.

Most of the core rallying modes show up in the online component and we found they performed quite well when compared to their single-player counterparts. If you want nothing more than to step up and ruin someone's records more times than a bad wedding DJ, this will absolutely deliver.

For anyone else who's just out for some casual fun, *DiRT 3* caters to your whimsical ways as well. There is a nifty car-based Capture the Flag mode called Transporter, where everyone aims to get to the flag and return it to their base before the other team steals it from them. This works because the spawn point for the flag is completely

randomised each time.

Invasion is the next mode: cardboard cut-out aliens are found around a course, and you must run over the most whilst avoiding the cardboard skyscrapers. It's servicable, but gets old kind of quick.

The pick of the litter is Outbreak, a "tip you're it" mode where one car is effectively a green zombie host. We haven't had this much fun trying (and failing) to avoid diseases in a car since our Year 12 formal after-party.

Anyway, the moral of the story is this: when it comes to being online *DiRT 3* is quite capable and has something for almost everybody.

VERDICT

Along with the stellar Gymkhana sandbox *DiRT 3* is a car-based cavalcade of modes that will please both petrol heads and casual neds.



PlayStation®Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH
PLAYERS: 1-16

Take *MW2* and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. However, we especially like playing Zombies with a skilled compatriot.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
PLAYERS: 1-16

The connection issues that bothered us are well and truly fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challengers. Much better as a co-op experience.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4

It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



FIFA 11

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
PLAYERS: 1-22

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

DEVELOPER: DICE
PLAYERS: 1-16

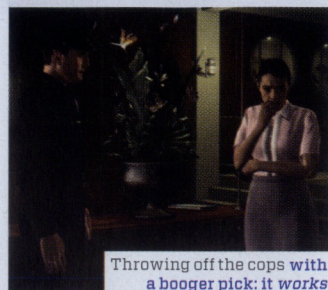
You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves.

► INTERROGATION GUIDE

L.A. Noire

Lie-detection skills letting you down? Backup is en route!

A good deal of the fun of *L.A. Noire* doesn't just come from chasing down perps, stealing wallets from stiff vics, or even finding random flamethrowers to use. No, the real joy comes from reading the expressions of witnesses and suspects and grilling them for answers. It's not an inbuilt skill for some people though; for example we think anyone not twirling a moustache is typically a stand-up kinda guy. For all you trusting suckers like us out there too gullible for your own good here's how to nail every interrogation in *L.A. Noire*!



Throwing off the cops with a booger pick: it works

PATROL DESK

► "Buyer Beware"

POI: Clovis Galletta

Shoe store sales assistant and eye-witness to the murder of Everett Gage

- **Question:** Eyewitness account
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Layaway voucher" you found in Gage's jacket.
- **Question:** Possible murder suspect
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Details of shooting
Response: Truth

POI: Edgar Kalou

Jewellery storeowner and murder suspect

- **Question:** Argument with Gage
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Suspect positively identified"
- **Question:** Possible religious motive
Response: Doubt

TRAFFIC DESK

► "The Driver's Seat"

POI: Nate Wilkey

Rail worker and reporting witness

- **Question:** Purpose at scene
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Knowledge of Adrian Black
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Contents of wallet
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Bloodstained pipe found
Response: Truth

POI: Margaret Black

Wife of the missing person Adrian Black

- **Question:** Slaughterhouse receipt
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Cavanagh's Bar matchbook
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Location of Adrian Black
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Stenzel glasses case
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Photograph signed 'Nicole'
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Concealed message" in the picture you just found
- **Question:** Alibi for Mrs Black
Response: Truth



The Good Cop - Flatulent Cop approach: always smells out a rat

POI: Frank Morgan

Deadbeat friend and co-worker of Adrian Black

- **Question:** Link to abandoned vehicle
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Receipt for live hog" you found in the boot
- **Question:** Location of Adrian Black
Response: Doubt

► "A Marriage Made in Heaven"

POI: Shannon Perry

Hit and run eyewitness

- **Question:** Eyewitness report
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Suspect vehicle description
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Argument overheard
Response: Doubt

POI: Dudley Lynch

Bartender at Ray's Cafe

- **Question:** Hit and run incident
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Association with victim
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Argument overheard in bar
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Joint business venture
Response: Doubt

POI: Lorna Pattison

Wife of hit and run victim

- Lester Pattison
- **Question:** Hit and run incident
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Nature of argument
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Partnership with Leroy Sabo
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Insurance letter" you found on Lester's body

► "The Fallen Idol"

POI: June Ballard

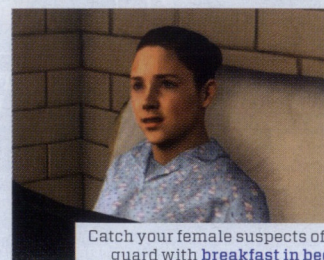
B-movie bitch and driver of crashed Chevrolet Styleline

- **Question:** Doping allegation
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Injured female passenger
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The torn "Underwear" the coroner had displayed at the crash site
- **Question:** Fake shrunken head
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Suspect 'Mark Bishop'
Response: Doubt

POI: Jessica Hamilton

Passenger in crashed Chevrolet Styleline

- **Question:** Crash incident report
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Underwear"
- **Question:** Contact with parents
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Letter from mother" from crash site
- **Question:** Association with Bishop
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Evidence of criminal abuse
Response: Truth



Catch your female suspects off guard with breakfast in bed

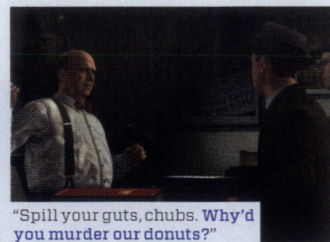


Real arson detectives cause their own crime scenes

POI: Gloria Bishop

Wife of Mark Bishop

- **Question:** Domestic disturbance
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Whereabouts of Bishop
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Check for \$20,000
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "\$20,000 check" you just found in the apartment
- **Question:** Abuse of Jessica Hamilton
Response: Doubt



"Spill your guts, chubs. Why'd you murder our donuts?"

POI: Marlon Hopgood

Owner of Silver Screen Props, slimeball

- **Question:** Association with Bishop
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Empty film canister" you just found out back
- **Question:** Whereabouts of Bishop
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Relationship with Ballard
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Empty film canister" again
- **Question:** Evidence of blackmail
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "\$20,000 check"

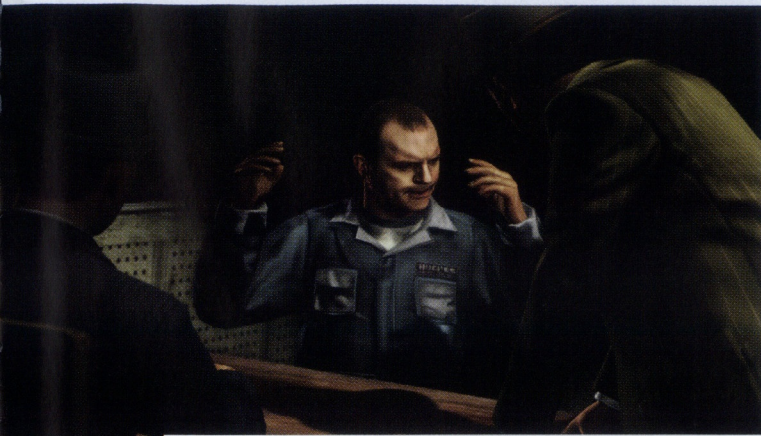
HOMICIDE DESK

► "The Red Lipstick Murder"

POI: McColl

Bamba Club owner and proprietor

- **Question:** Suspect seen with victim
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Ring stolen from victim
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Knowledge of husband
Response: Doubt



"Talk, or we'll paint your fingernails in an *even more* unflattering shade"

POI: Jacob Henry

Husband of murder victim Celine Henry

- **Question:** Movements of victim
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Husband's alibi" you got from McColl
- **Question:** Last contact with victim
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Motive for murder
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Death threat note"

► "The Golden Butterfly"

POI: Michelle Moller

Daughter of murder victim Deldre Moller

- **Question:** Missing watch and rings
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Last contact with victim
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** State of parents' marriage
Response: Doubt



Wasn't Matt from *Heroes* a cop who could detect liars? **Woah, headspin**

POI: Hugo Moller

Husband of murder victim Deldre Moller

- **Question:** Footprints at crime scene
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Size eight work boots" you found in the house
- **Question:** Missing persons report
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Alibi for Hugo Moller
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Husband's alibi" Michelle just let slip
- **Question:** History of violence
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Butterfly brooch"

POI: Eli Rooney

Alleged child sex offender

- **Question:** Place of employment
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Access to braided rope
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Motive for Moller murder
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Footprints at crime scene
Response: Doubt

POI: Hugo Moller

Husband of murder victim Deldre Moller

- **Question:** Disposal of evidence
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Access to braided rope
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Victim's vehicle recovered

Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Overalls"

- **Question:** Access to tire iron
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Bloody tire iron"

NOTE: You can pin the murder on either one of these guys but go with Eli Rooney.

► "The Silk Stocking Murder"

POI: Barbara Lapenti

Boarding House owner

- **Question:** Possible suspects
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Movements of victim
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Evidence of break-in
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Broken window" you just found in Antonia's room
- **Question:** Breakdown of marriage
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Charm bracelet photograph" you just found in Antonia's room



It's all fun and games until she unleashes the winged monkeys

POI: Diego Aguilar

El Dorado

- **Question:** Missing jewellery
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Movements of victim
Response: Truth

POI: Angel Maldonado

Estranged husband of murder victim Antonia Maldonado

- **Question:** Last contact with victim
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Husband's alibi"
- **Question:** Divorce proceedings
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Divorce papers"
- **Question:** Jewellery taken from body
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Bloodstained shirt found
Response: Doubt

POI: Clem Feeney

Just Picked Fruit Market owner

- **Question:** Distinctive necklace
Response: Doubt



GENERAL TIPS

- Find (and, if necessary, properly inspect) every clue to make sure you can nail every interrogation. Don't stop searching until the music stops. If you're stumped, use an Intuition Point. With the following interrogation guide you should have plenty to spare.
- Don't hit civilians or other vehicles if you want the highest ratings for your cases.
- Pay attention to the extra tips at the end of each case. If you've missed an opportunity for something extra it'll tell you. Take too long reaching an apartment being ransacked by goons in "The Fallen Idol", for instance, and you'll miss the chance to beat the piss out of them.
- Remember you've got a few options to take down rabbiting suspects: get close enough to tackle them, a warning blast or a fatal shot. In "A Marriage Made in Heaven", for instance, you can stop the fleeing Leroy Sabo with a warning shot but if you don't he'll take a hostage and you'll be forced to put a bullet in his brain.
- Some cases don't include any interrogations, like "The Quarter Moon Murders" and some of the final cases, so they aren't listed below. If you get stumped just ask your partner for advice. Failing that the game will prod you in the right direction eventually. Be sure to use phones when you ought to as well.
- Use the siren! Cross traffic will (generally) spot you barrelling through intersections and slam on their anchors to give way to you – even if you don't have your siren on – but using it makes things easier.

- **Question:** Contact with victim

Response: Doubt

- **Question:** Movements of victim

Response: Truth

► "The White Shoe Slaying"

POI: Catherine Barton

Witness

- **Question:** Suspicious persons
Response: Truth

POI: Lars Taraldsen

Husband of murder victim Theresa Taraldsen

- **Question:** Possible suspects
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Bow rope" from his boat in the driveway

- **Question:** Alibi for Lars Taraldsen

Response: Doubt

- **Question:** Victim's state of mind

Response: Doubt

- **Question:** Last contact with victim

Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Wet jacket" or the "Muddy boots" you just found in his laundry

POI: Benny Cluff

Baron's Bar bartender

- **Question:** Last contact with victim

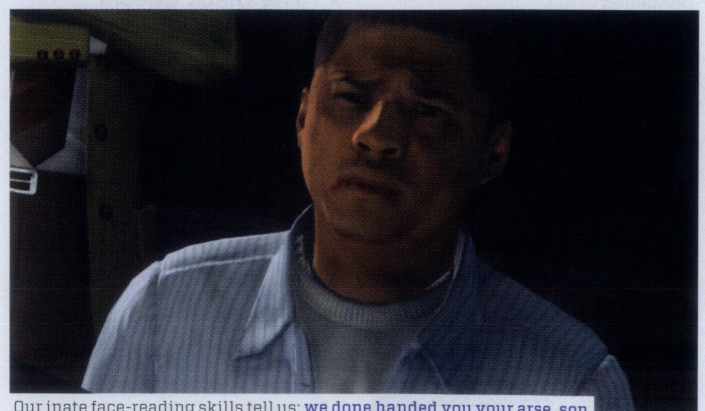
Response: Truth

- **Question:** Vagrant male suspect

Response: Doubt

- **Question:** Yellow Cab 3591

Response: Truth



Our innate face-reading skills tell us: **we done handed you your arse, son**



She had gams **that went all the way up**

POI: Richard Bates

Alleged acquaintance of victim Theresa Taraldsen

- **Question:** Contact with victim
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Account of movements
Response: Doubt

POI: James Jessop

US Navy Able Seaman seen with victim on night of murder

- **Question:** Contact with victim
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Incident with Bates
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Movements prior to murder
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Cab ride with victim
Response: Doubt

POI: Stuart Ackerman

Hobo spotted in the vicinity of the murder scene

- **Question:** Motive for murder
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Bloodstained rope piece"
- **Question:** Contact with victim
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Alibi for Stuart Ackerman
Response: Doubt

► "The Studio Secretary Murder"

POI: John Ferdinand Jamison

Rail worker, freak

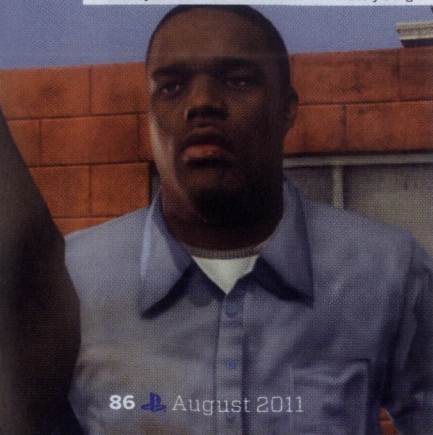
- **Question:** Interference with evidence
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Discovery of victim's body
Response: Doubt

POI: Robbins

Liquor store operator and friend of victim Evelyn Summers

- **Question:** Contact with victim
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Relationship with victim
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Knowledge of McCaffery
Response: Doubt

"Uh, the script says I have to punch and arrest you now." **"I wouldn't."** "...off you go"



POI: Grosvenor McCaffery

Known acquaintance of murder victim Evelyn Summers, douchebag

- **Question:** Criminal history
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Relationship with victim
Response: Lie **Evidence:** The "Book" you found with Evelyn Summers' effects

POI: James Tiernan

Rawling's Bowling Alley employee and friend of Evelyn Summers

- **Question:** Relationship with victim
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Victim last seen"
- **Question:** Victim's book found
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Alibi for James Tiernan
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Liquor purchase"
- **Question:** Access to murder weapon
Response: Doubt

POI: Grosvenor McCaffery

Known acquaintance of murder victim Evelyn Summers, douchebag

- **Question:** Alibi for McCaffery
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Torn letter"
- **Question:** Access to tire iron
Response: Lie **Evidence:** Use "Tiernan's accusation"

• James Tiernan

Rawling's Bowling Alley employee and friend of Evelyn Summers

- **Question:** Events prior to murder
Response: Lie **Evidence:** Use "McCaffery's accusation"

POI: Grosvenor McCaffery

Known acquaintance of murder victim Evelyn Summers, douchebag

- **Question:** Military service
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "McCaffery's criminal record"

VICE DESK

► "The Black Caesar"

POI: Fleetwood Morgan

Fry cook at The Black Caesar food hut, suspected morphine dealer

- **Question:** Morphine overdose victims
Response: Lie **Evidence:** Bring up the "Morphine for distribution" you just found with the popcorn in the food hut
- **Question:** Numbers slips recovered
Response: Doubt

POI: Jermaine Jones

Booking agent who booked gigs for the overdose victims

- **Question:** Army surplus morphine
Response: Doubt

- **Question:** Involvement of 'Ottie'
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Distributor identified"
- **Question:** Link to Ramez Removals
Response: Doubt

POI: Merlon Ottie

Bookmaker and numbers hustler

- **Question:** Army surplus morphine
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Finkelstein identification"
- **Question:** IOU note from Jose Ramez
Response: Truth

► "The Set Up"

POI: Candy Edwards

Girlfriend of Albert Hammond

- **Question:** Whereabouts of Hammond
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Magazine coupon"
- **Question:** List of odds recovered
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Bookmakers' payouts"
- **Question:** Plans to leave town
Response: Doubt

► "Manifest Destiny"

POI: Hostess

Hostess at the 111 Club

- **Question:** 111 Club shooting incident
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Knowledge of McGoldrick
Response: Truth

POI: Elsa Lichtmann

Nightclub Jazz singer

- **Question:** Army surplus morphine
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Morphine overdose victims
Response: Doubt

POI: Meyer Harris Cohen

Organised crime kingpin

- **Question:** Finkelstein drug operation
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** 111 Club shooting incident
Response: Doubt



"Eyyy foggedaboutit". **Goon translation:** Drop it, or I'll drop you

POI: Felix Alvarro

Former Marine and Hollywood bus driver

- **Question:** Informed of Coolridge heist
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Motive for shooting
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Sniper's pocketbook"

POI: Jack Kelso

Former Marine with bad blood between himself and Phelps

- **Question:** Army surplus morphine
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Ex-Marine McGoldrick
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Arms stolen from Coolridge
Response: Truth
- **Question:** SS Coolridge robbery
Response: Doubt

POI: Courtney Sheldon

Former Marine medic

- **Question:** 6th Marines being targeted

Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Shooter's notebook"

- **Question:** SS Coolridge robbery
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Beckett's confession"

ARSON DESK

► "The Gas Man"

POI: Don Steffens

Homeowner and arson victim

- **Question:** Travel competition
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Suburban Redevelopment
Response: Doubt

POI: John Cunningham

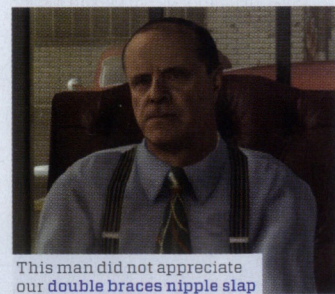
Gulliver's Travel Agency sales representative

- **Question:** Suburban Redevelopment
Response: Truth
- **Question:** Promotional travel contest
Response: Doubt

POI: Ivan Rasic

InstaHeat factory manager

- **Question:** InstaHeat Model 70
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Heater service history
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Heater serviced by Ryan"



This man did not appreciate our **double braces nipple slap**

POI: Walter Clemens

InstaHeat gas fitter

- **Question:** Knowledge of Varley
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Employment with InstaHeat
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Knowledge of Ryan
Response: Lie **Evidence:** Bring up "Clemens' anarchist pamphlets" you found in the staff locker room

POI: Matthew Ryan

InstaHeat gas fitter

- **Question:** Anarchist literature
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Ryans' anarchist pamphlets"
- **Question:** InstaHeat Model 70
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Ivan Rasic's statement"
- **Question:** Suburban Redevelopment
Response: Doubt
- **Question:** Attempted murder charge
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Ryan's criminal record"

POI: Reginald Varley

InstaHeat gas fitter

- **Question:** Work at Sawyer's residence
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Heater serviced by Varley"
- **Question:** Suburban Redevelopment
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Water Clemens' statement"
- **Question:** InstaHeat Model 70
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Mosquito coils"

HIDDEN CARS



▲ Ford H Boy: In an Alaco station at the Corner of Kingsley Drive and Beverly Blvd.



▲ Phantom Corsair: At the Alaco station at 3rd and Traction Ave.



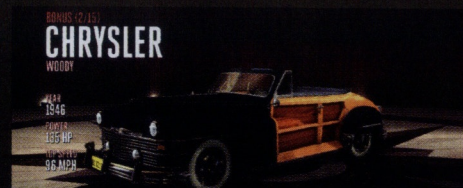
Voisin C7: In the Alaco station at La Brea and Sunset Blvd.



▲ Cadillac Town Car: At Fountain and Bronson in the Alaco station garage.



▲ Cisitalia Coupe: In an Alaco station at Vermont and Melrose.



▲ Chrysler Woody: West of 7th and Vermont at the end of an alley.



▲ Cord 810 Softtop: At the bottom of the sloping driveway near a two-storey building with a water tower on top, on Mateo Street. Look for the door with the gold doorknob.



▲ Tucker Torpedo: In a small garage between two buildings at the corner of Oakwood and Western. You'll need to get into the parking lot around back to get to the garage.



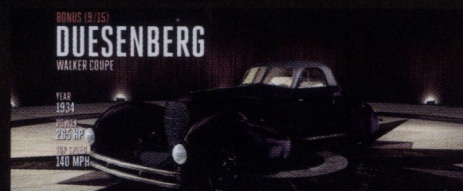
▲ Davis Deluxe: On the border of Hollywood and Wilshire, near Melrose Ave. It's inside a residential garage. You'll need to get in using a side door with a gold knob.



▲ Delage D8 120: In the alley between Beacon Ave. And Union Ave., behind Meisner's Hardware Store.



▲ Delage D8 120 S Poutout Aero-Co: Look for a grey and white garage near a mansion on the corner near Normandie Ave. and Lemongrove Ave.



▲ Duesenberg Walker Coupe: In the garage behind the Automobile Club of Southern California, located at Santa Monica and El Centro.



▲ Talbot GS26: In the Alaco Station at the corner of Bixel St. and 6th.



▲ Delahaye 135MS Cabriolet: North of Franklin near Ivar Ave. is a shopping complex. Check beside it for a house with an attached garage.



▲ Stout Scarab: Between 4th Street and Whittler Blvd., east of the Los Angeles River. Look for a five-storey grey building with the garage in the back.

NOTE: Charge Matthew Ryan with the murder of the Sawyer family.

▶ "A Walk in Elysian Fields"

POI: Dudley Forman

Morelli family neighbour

• **Question:** Morelli fire witness report

Response: Doubt

• **Question:** Suspicious activity (you need to find the cigarette butts in Forman's front yard for this question to appear) **Response:** Doubt

• **Question:** Planned demolitions

Response: Doubt

• **Question:** Promotional travel contest

Response: Truth

POI: Leland Monroe

President of Elysian Fields Developments

• **Question:** Elysian linked to arsons

Response: Doubt

• **Question:** Promotional travel contest

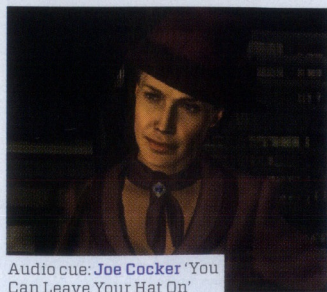
Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Elysian Fields flyers"

• **Question:** Local land acquisitions

Response: Doubt

• **Question:** Rancho Escondido fire

Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Poor cement quality"



Audio cue: Joe Cocker 'You Can Leave Your Hat On'

▶ "House of Sticks"

POI: Elsa Lichtmann

Nightclub jazz singer, beneficiary of Lou Buchwalter's Insurance policy

• **Question:** Disputed claim payout

Response: Doubt

• **Question:** Connection to Buchwalter

Response: Doubt

• **Question:** Motive for dispute

Response: Truth

▶ "A Polite Invitation"

POI: Curtis Benson

Vice President of California Fire & Life

• **Question:** Motive for fraud **Response:**

Lie **Evidence:** "Share certificate"

• **Question:** Suburban Redevelopment

Response: Lie **Evidence:** "Insurance agreement"

• **Question:** Buchwalter case settlement

Response: Doubt



► MUST WATCH

Daria - The Complete Animated Series

(PG)

CREATED BY: GLENN EICHLER, SUSIE LEWIS LYNN **CAST:** TRACY GRANDSTAFF, WENDY HOOPES, JULIÁN REBOLLEDO, MARC THOMPSON, ALVARO J. GONZALEZ **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

It's kind of odd that one of the best sitcoms of the '90s was a spin-off of *Beavis and Butt-head* that most of you probably watched after school on ABC.

Daria is the story of a misfit teenager and the bizarre cast of oddballs that surround her.

Between all 65 episodes, plus the pilot and both made-for-TV movies (*Is It Fall Yet?* and *Is It College Yet?*) the entire package weighs in at more than 26 hours. That's a lot of intelligent and subversive comedy for \$49.95.

The only problem is 99 per cent of the music bites have been changed; the cost of licensing all the songs would have made it impossible to release the collection (and for many years did).

Watch this if you like *The '90s*

Verdict

Daria is a stinging indictment of everything MTV now embraces. Sometimes downright caustic but always sincere, clever and witty.

9



THE TOWN

(MA 15+)

DIRECTOR BEN AFFLECK **CAST** BEN AFFLECK, REBECCA HALL, JON HAMM, JEREMY RENNER **AVAILABLE** (OWN) \$32.99, 1496MB (SD) 5638MB (HD)

As he plans his next job, a longtime thief tries to balance his feelings for a bank manager connected to one of his earlier heists. This turns out to be a failed transaction as an obsessive FBI agent closes in on him and his crew.

Boston ex-pat Affleck proves to be in his element here guiding a film based in Charlestown; it's a suburb renowned for churning out a high number of armed robbers, generation after generation.

Balancing the adrenaline heist movie highs with superb

characters and pacing, *The Town* is marvellously executed and was one of the best movies of 2010. If you're a fan of Michael Mann's work you have simply have no excuse for missing this.

Verdict Ben Affleck skilfully acts, writes and directs *The Town*. Must-watch material.

9

PlayStation®Store

► TOP TEN

Movies on Demand



- 1 **Due Date** Warner Bros.
- 2 **Devil** Universal
- 3 **Saw: The Final Chapter** Sony
- 4 **The 11th Hour** Warner Bros.
- 5 **Diary Of A Wimpy Kid** Fox
- 6 **Dumb & Dumberer: When Harry Met Lloyd** Roadshow
- 7 **Takers** Sony
- 8 **The Experiment** Sony
- 9 **The Town** Warner Bros.
- 10 **You Again** Touchstone

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The Adjustment Bureau

DIRECTOR: GEORGE NOLFI **CAST:** MATT DAMON, EMILY BLUNT, ANTHONY MACKIE, TERENCE STAMP, JOHN SLATTERY **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

On the brink of winning a seat in the US Senate, ambitious politician David Norris (Damon) meets beautiful ballet dancer Elise Sellas (Emily Blunt) – a woman like none he's ever known before. However, just as he realises he's falling for her, a group of mysterious men appear and proceed to do everything they can to keep David and Elise apart. David learns he is up against the agents of Fate – the men of The Adjustment Bureau. Men who will do everything in their power to prevent David and Elise from ever being together.

A science fiction thriller mashed with an old-fashioned romance, *The Adjustment Bureau* is based on a short story by legendary sci-fi author Philip K. Dick (*Total Recall*, *Blade Runner*, *Minority Report*).

Watch this if you like *Inception*, *Total Recall*

Verdict An enjoyable ride and certainly one of the smartest movies of 2011 so far.

8



The Mechanic

DIRECTOR: SIMON WEST **CAST:** JASON STATHAM, BEN FOSTER, DONALD SUTHERLAND, TONY GOLDWYN **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

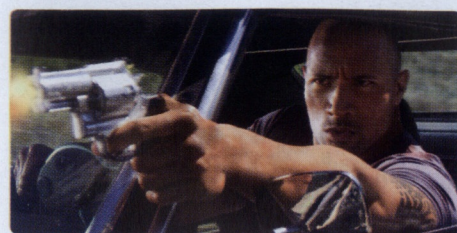
Arthur Bishop (Statham) is a 'mechanic' – an elite assassin. His incredible talent for cleanly eliminating targets has made him the best in the business. However, after his mentor and only friend Harry (Sutherland) is killed Bishop sets about tracking down those who ordered the hit. His mission gets complicated when Harry's son Steve (Foster) approaches him with the same desire and a steely determination to learn Bishop's trade.

A remake of the 1972 version of the same name (starring Charles Bronson), *The Mechanic* is pretty standard revenge fare. Statham plays the same character that he is in every movie (a deadly and emotionless badarse) but it works for him. Foster impresses as his protégé.

Watch this if you like Jason Statham

Verdict An efficient, fast moving flick with plenty of action but lacking a bit of personality.

7



Faster

DIRECTOR: GEORGE TILLMAN, JR. **CAST:** DWAYNE JOHNSON, BILLY BOB THORNTON, CARLA GUGINO, MAGGIE GRACE, TOM BERENGER **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

After serving 10 years behind bars for bank robbery a man, known only as the Driver (Johnson), has just one objective: to avenge the murder of his older brother who was killed when they were double-crossed after the ill-fated heist. Now a free man the Driver sets about settling the score. Only two people stand in his way: the Cop (Thornton), a veteran lawman only days from retiring, and the Killer (Jackson-Cohen), an ice-cold hitman.

Overall *Faster* is a decent nod to classic revenge movies of the '70s; lean and old-school. There are muscle cars. There are gunfights. It has The Rock in it. It's great to see Dwayne Johnson making action films again; he has fantastic presence on screen.

Also, we're suckers for anything that uses music from The Heavy. Every track this band produces just screams action movie soundtrack.

Watch this if you like *Payback*

Verdict The kind of B-movie revenge-'em-up that would rule a drive-in, if we had them anymore.

7



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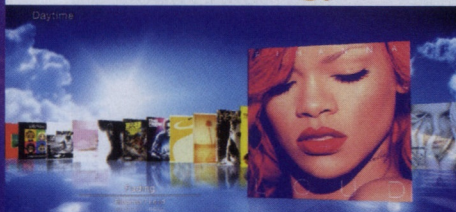
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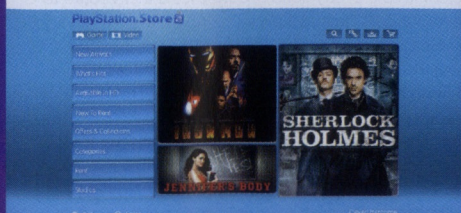
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► NOW SHOWING

The Hangover Part II

(MA15+)

DIRECTOR: TODD PHILLIPS **CAST:** ZACH GALIFIANAKIS, BRADLEY COOPER, JUSTIN BARTHA, ED HELMS, KEN JEONG, MASON LEE
IN CINEMAS: NOW

The cast from 2009's surprise hit comedy are back, bumbling their way through another post-bender haze trying to piece together what happened. Yep, it's a near clone of the original, but if you liked the first one is that such a bad thing?

This time it's Stu turn to get married in Thailand. After reluctantly allowing Alan (Galifianakis) to join himself, Phil (Cooper), Doug (Bartha) and his fiancée's little brother Teddy (Lee), it looks like everything's going to be fine once they touch down at their luxurious beach resort. That is, until Stu, Alan and Phil wake up in a hotel they don't recognise in the middle of Bangkok, minus Teddy, but with a finger in a bowl of water and the manic Mr. Chow (Jeong) filling them in.

This is a no-brainer for fans of the first, as the setup is near identical and though the pacing is slightly off it still delivers. There are a bunch of references to what happened in Vegas but it's not unreasonable to accept that a stack of the gags rely on you watching the original.

Phillips' motto seems to be 'bigger and more', especially when it comes to Galifianakis. Alan is more moronic and spews out non sequiturs a bit too much, but as *The Hangover Part II* picks up after a slightly sluggish start you'll reap fun in seeing how the guys backtrack their way through the night before.

Watch this if you like *The Hangover*, *Due Date*



Not pictured: Rose Byrne

Pictured: Rose Byrne



Bridesmaids

(MA15+)

DIRECTOR: PAUL FEIG **CAST:** KRISTEN WIIG, MAYA RUDOLPH, ROSE BYRNE, JOHN HAMM
IN CINEMAS: NOW

Don't be fooled by the title or the bright pink posters at the cinema. This comedy, held up by Kristen Wiig and a slew of pitch perfect supporting cast members, is produced by Judd Apatow. He's the guy responsible for *Knocked Up* and *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, so you can be assured that a romantic comedy with his name associated with it is going to have a certain flavour that is anything but your typical 'chick flick'.

It begins spectacularly enough, with Annie (Wiig) in the middle of raucous bedroom antics with her kinda boyfriend (Hamm). Get a good look at him, because his time on screen is dominated by the ladies in *Bridesmaids*. Annie's a complex character, made more so as she's lost her business,

a cake shop, during the recession. Between her quirky flatmates and mental mother she has her best friend Lillian (Rudolph), the one person who truly understands her. The two are close, but when Lillian tells Annie she's getting married, Annie – the maid of honour – has to deal with Lillian's new friend Helen (Byrne), a slender, good looking challenger to her relationship with Lillian. There's a lot of friction between the two of them as Helen tries to control the wedding, and the rest of the bridesmaids are left to duck and cover.

While the laughs are at times patchy it strikes hard when it does get the formula right. Wiig's a star on *Saturday Night Live* in the US and her talent shows here.

Pictured: it's, uh, Rose Byrne



X-Men: First Class

(M)

DIRECTOR: MATTHEW VAUGHN **CAST:** JAMES MCAVOY, MICHAEL FASSBENDER, ROSE BYRNE **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

It's hard to believe that the first X-Men movie came out 11 years ago, having been brought into the newly-minted 21st Century by Bryan Singer. Of course, Singer's no longer on the project (he stopped after the second movie to direct *Superman Returns*) and the last two X-Men flicks were pretty, well, crap in comparison.

So, welcome to a pretty solid prequel. It's a tricky route to take as the producers have risked mucking up the events and not being able to segue into 2000's film. They've avoided it here (mostly) though the ending feels a bit rushed, as though they were hedging their bets on getting a sequel to the prequel made.

The film clips along a decent pace too, and it's the film's main flaw as plot takes precedence over allowing it to fully form. There's a human drama at the heart of a mutant conflict, and the potential's there to make two stories out of this one movie, as the schism between Charles Xavier (McAvoy) and Erik Lehnsherr – aka Magneto (Fassbender) – presents itself and widens. Definitely worth watching, especially if you felt burned by *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.



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index

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

ACTION

50 Cent: Blood on the Sand 7
SWORDFISH STUDIOS
So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.

Army of Two 7
EA MONTREAL
Solid co-op thrills make up for its wasted potential.

Army of Two: The 40th Day 7
EA MONTREAL
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the first.

Avatar 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.

RECOMMENDED Bayonetta 9
PLATINUM GAMES
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

Bionic Commando 7
GRIN
There are some great moments but they're few and far between.

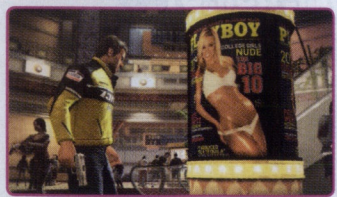
The Bourne Conspiracy 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish but superficial.

The Club 8
BIZARRE CREATIONS
Original, compulsive and fun.

Damnation 3
BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

Dark Sector 7
DIGITAL EXTREMES
Solid but hardly perfect.

Dark Void 6
AIRTIGHT GAMES
Unimpressive graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.



DEAD RISING 2 9
DEVELOPER: BLUE CASTLE GAMES
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-4

"You'll wear a stupid grin pretty much from start to finish and it's a riot in co-op. A must-play. The satisfaction of literally cutting down thousands of zombies with anything you can pick up is its only hook but it works a treat."

Dead to Rights: Retribution 6
VOLATILE GAMES
Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.

Devil May Cry 4 7
CAPCOM
Memorable bosses but too much backtracking spoils things.

Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard 6
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Great concept and nice parody, but basic one-play stuff.

Front Mission Evolved 7
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
Likable but limited mech-based combat.

Genji: Days of the Blade 5
GAME REPUBLIC
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game 9
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Iron Man 3
SECRET LEVEL
Filled to the brim with bugs. Substandard.

John Woo Presents: Stranglehold 7
MIDWAY CHICAGO
Packs frantic Max Payne-lite fun.



JUST CAUSE 2 9
DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
"Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. Why don't you already own this game? If you can dream it, you can do it in this insane action game."

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men 6
IO INTERACTIVE
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days 7
IO INTERACTIVE
Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

Lost Planet 2 7
CAPCOM
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Weak in many areas but has fun in spades. The Saboteur does it better, though.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight 3
NAMCO BANDAI
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 8
TEAM NINJA
A treasure trove of violent gaming goodness.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 8
TEAM NINJA
A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's been cut.

RECOMMENDED Prototype 8
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of guilty fun.

RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla 9
VOLITION, INC.
The best destruction effects ever, hands down.

Saints Row 2 9
VOLITION, INC.
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

RECOMMENDED SOCOM: Special Forces 8
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Great online with Move and a Sharp Shooter, though solo ain't that special.

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation 6
SLANT SIX GAMES
A sturdy effort that fails to excite.

Terminator Salvation 4
GRIN / HALCYON GAMES
An abysmal failure. Short, filled with glitches.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm 6
NAMCO BANDAI
Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 8
RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen 6
LUXOFLUX
A day of undemanding fun but no more.

Transformers: War for Cybertron 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Good multiplayer, and that's about it.

RECOMMENDED Vanquish 8
PLATINUM GAMES
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

Wanted: Weapons of Fate 5
GRIN
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

RECOMMENDED Warhawk 9
INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

WET 8
A2M
Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance.

Wheelman 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS
Rubbish low-speed handling and underdone throughout.

X-Men Origins: Wolverine 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
A head slicin' chest beater of a slash 'em up.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7
GAME REPUBLIC
A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A landmark, though slightly dated now.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed II 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
The pinnacle of the series so far and the multiplayer is outstanding.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever. Best superhero game full stop.

RECOMMENDED Brutal Legend 9
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS
Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God. It's so cheap these days; grab it today.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9
MERCURY STEAM
Easily one of the best games of 2010.

Clash of the Titans 4
GAME REPUBLIC
A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.

RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno 8
VISCERAL GAMES
Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders 8
VIGIL GAMES
It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 9
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2 9
VISCERAL GAMES
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

Demon's Souls 7
FROM SOFTWARE
Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved 8
NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's Monkey was.

Fairytale Fights 7
PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY
Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

Folklore 8
GAME REPUBLIC
Original and surprising with moments of genius.

The Godfather: The Don's Edition 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
It made for a decent PS2 game but skip this port. It's not worth it.

Picture perfect

Team Bondi's incredible recreation of 1947 Los Angeles in *L.A. Noire* owes much of its stunning authenticity to one man: Robert Earl Spence. During the '20s deep-pocketed Los Angelenos would hire Spence to take aerial photographs of their homes. Spence in turn hired a pilot and a plane to complete the task, hanging out from the cockpit with a 46-pound camera. The collection showed Team Bondi hundreds of crucial details the team couldn't see in street photo reference materials.



Highly trained SEALs



The United States Naval Special Warfare Development Group, commonly known as DEVGRU (and informally by its former name SEAL Team Six) is one of the United States' two secretive Tier One counter-terrorism units. Founded by Dick Marcinko (star of *Rogue Warrior*) and featured as the bearded Tier 1 specialists in *Medal of Honor*, they're now best known for the covert operation that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden.

The Godfather II 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Starts as a decent crime caper but alienates fans of the film. Play *Mafia II* instead.

ESSENTIAL God of War III 10
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection 9
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately.

Golden Axe: Beast Rider 4
SECRET LEVEL
Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV 10
ROCKSTAR NORTH
The technical scope and scale of *GTA IV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City 9
ROCKSTAR NORTH
Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 6
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Heavenly Sword 9
NINJA THEORY
Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.

RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox.

LEGO Batman 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
The most thorough LEGO universe yet.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures 9
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action. Kids should adore it.

Lost: Via Domus 6
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

Mafia II 8
2K CZECH
Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots 10
KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane. A titan amongst games. Epic.

Overlord: Raising Hell 7
4J STUDIOS / TRIUMPH STUDIOS
A bundle of fun, mixing tactics with a juvenile love of chaos.

Overlord II 8
TRIUMPH STUDIOS
Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End 6
EUROCOM
Looks the part but unfortunately it doesn't feel or play the part.

Planet 51 5
PYRO STUDIOS
Like a dry cracker for dinner. Bland and boring, and no fun.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Worth your time but better swordplay could've really helped.

Prison Break 4
ZOOTFLY
A below-average stealth game cobbled together on the cheap.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction 8
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 10
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1-16
"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played. We're not lying when we say it's better than *GTA IV* in a lot of crucial areas. Also, the zombie-themed *Undead Nightmare* DLC is boss."

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 9
CAPCOM
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

SAW II: Flesh & Blood 6
ZOMBIE INC.
Lacks finesse but boasts some decent puzzles.

Silent Hill Homecoming 6
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

The Simpsons Game 8
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Short, but the cromulent visuals embiggen the experience.

Sonic the Hedgehog 4
SONIC TEAM
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

Sonic Unleashed 6
SONIC TEAM
Hey! It's the least awful Sonic game in years!

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions 5
BEENOX
Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows 7
TREYARCH / SHABA GAMES
Swift and tidy but not exactly deep.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 7
LUCASARTS
Fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II 6
LUCASARTS
Gets a point-and-a-bit for hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent 9
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

Toy Story 3 7
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
Cute, simple, and charming as hell.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune 10
NAUGHTY DOG
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10
NAUGHTY DOG
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

Viking: Battle for Asgard 7
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
Slow attacks and weak visuals but it has its appeal.

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4 8
CSI TEAM
One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

ADVENTURE

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain 8
QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.



NEW L.A. NOIRE 10
DEVELOPER: TEAM BONDI
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1
"The game world itself is the most detailed we've ever seen. If Team Bondi's Los Angeles was a skirt she'd be a blonde. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window. The patient mix of slow-paced adventure gaming and well-executed open world action is hugely satisfying.

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust 1
TEAM17 SOFTWARE
An amazing new low for this generation.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



FINAL FANTASY VII
DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



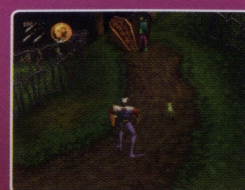
DRIVER
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through 3D cities may old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



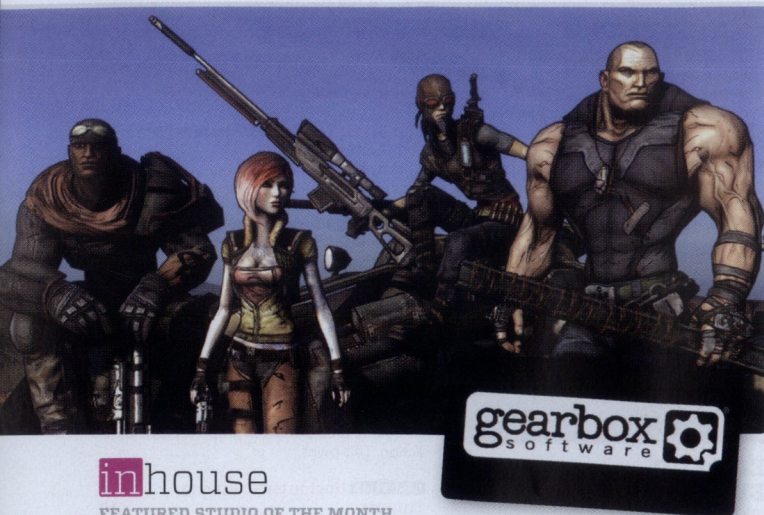
CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PLAYERS: 1
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER
DEVELOPER: EIDETIC
PLAYERS: 1
If you still think *Syphon Filter* was a MGS rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



MEDIEVIL
DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO
CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

Gearbox Software

LOCATION: PLANO, TEXAS **FOUNDED:** 1999
BEST KNOWN FOR: BORDERLANDS

Over the past 12 years Gearbox Software has become somewhat of a larrikin. Or, rather, its president and default spokesman, Randy Pitchford, has earned that status.

Life for Gearbox began back in 1999, comprised of staff from 3D Realms and Bethesda Studios, amongst others. Along with developing new content to further the *Half-Life* universe on PC, Gearbox also converted the original *Half-Life* to PlayStation 2. It also developed a version for SEGA's Dreamcast but, while that game was essentially complete, the publisher at the time, Sierra, canned it due to seriously dwindling support for the ill-fated console.

It was its time on, and success with the *Half-Life* expansions that spurred the studio on, and also enabled them to branch out from their work with Valve, developer of *Half-Life* on PC. Gearbox converted *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* from console to PC in 2002, as well as Bungie's *Halo: Combat Evolved* and EA's *James Bond 007: Nightfire* in 2003.

In 2005, Gearbox released *Brothers In Arms: Road to Hill 30*, the company's first original IP. It was a shooter that was more about tactics than run-and-gun gameplay, and was swiftly followed by its sequel, *Earned In Blood*, only seven months later. The *Brothers In Arms* franchise then went on to be converted to

other platforms beyond home consoles and PC, appearing on handheld consoles and also mobile formats.

In contrast, the third 'proper' *Brothers In Arms* game, *Hell's Highway*, took roughly three years to appear. Speaking to *1up.com* about the game, Pitchford said, "We didn't wanna clip it and ship it. We wanted to make a good game and make sure it was a game that we were proud of." It's a philosophy that Gearbox has maintained, preferring to get things 'just so' before releasing its product.

While its early work demonstrated an ability to dabble in multiple genres, its last few (and also upcoming) titles have been primarily shooters. *Borderlands*, in 2009, was put into a tricky position by releasing around the same time as *Modern Warfare 2* and *Dragon Age: Origins*. Analyst Michael Pachter from Wedbush Morgan said the game was being "sent to die." *Borderlands* has since shifted more than three million units and was the fastest selling new IP of 2009.

Lately, Gearbox finished the work started by 3D Realms by wrapping up *Duke Nukem Forever*, and will also release *Aliens: Colonial Marines*, to be published by SEGA. Pitchford's hiring philosophy is remarkably stark: "No drama, no dicks, no douchebags."

FIGHTING

Battle Fantasia 7
 ARC SYSTEM WORKS
 A nice curiosity but, seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.

RECOMMENDED BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 9
 ARC SYSTEM WORKS
 Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.

FaceBreaker 7
 EA CANADA
 Great look but very unbalanced.

The Fight: Lights Out 5
 COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE
 The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

The King of Fighters XII 3
 SNK PLAYMORE
 Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable..

RECOMMENDED Marvel vs. Capcom 3 8
 CAPCOM
 Fast, fun and gorgeous. Features Haggar.

Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe 7
 MIDWAY GAMES
 A fun game with mass appeal but not very technical.

RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV 8
 NAMCO BANDAI
 Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.

RECOMMENDED Street Fighter IV 10
 CAPCOM / DIMPS
 A tight-fisted gut blow of wow, but you'd grab *Super Street Fighter IV* instead now.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 10
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/DIMPS
PUBLISHER: THQ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
 "With the 'vanilla' versions vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay - but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price - *Super Street Fighter IV* belongs in everyone's collection."

RECOMMENDED Tekken 6 8
 NAMCO BANDAI
 Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

TNA Impact! 6
 MIDWAY STUDIOS - LOS ANGELES
 Arcade-style biff but needs more content.

WWE Legends of WrestleMania 6
 YUKE'S
 Gets by on retro charm but feels absolutely ancient.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 8
 YUKE'S
 If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

FLIGHT

Apache: Air Assault 7
 GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
 Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII 7
 UBISOFT ROMANIA
 A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII 6
 UBISOFT ROMANIA
 Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

Heroes Over Europe 7
 TRANSMISSION GAMES
 A little rough but not bad. *IL-2* is much better, though.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY 8
DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
PUBLISHER: AFA **PLAYERS:** 1-16
 "Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've ever played."

Lair 5
 FACTOR 5
 It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply disappointing.

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 7
 UBISOFT ROMANIA
 Tight and accessible but a bit sterile.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 8
 UBISOFT ROMANIA
 A top gun successor. More detail, better mission design.

THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEADS
PLAYERS: 1-6
 This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP - and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're totally serious.



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4
Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates.



WIPEOUT PULSE
DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL
PLAYERS: 1-8
 Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works - and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER
DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
PLAYERS: 1-6
 A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*, this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA
DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
PLAYERS: 1
 Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

MUSIC

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack 7
HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.

Band Hero 7
NEVERSOFT
Robust but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band 9
HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Tough to write off as a gimmick.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Some great improvements and some excellent, unique mixes.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band 8
HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock 9
NEVERSOFT
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.

Guitar Hero World Tour 9
NEVERSOFT
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.

Guitar Hero 5 7
NEVERSOFT
Improving, but the hipster tracklist is a dud.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica 8
NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits 7
BEENOX
Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Seriously though, why wasn't it just DLC?

Guitar Hero: Van Halen 6
UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it as a free bonus.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock 7
NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it just isn't evolving at the same rate as its peers.

LEGO Rock Band 8
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

NEW Michael Jackson The Experience 5
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Better with mates but feels cheap.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 10
HARMONIX
The best party game ever, until the sequels.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2 10
HARMONIX
The best music game series around.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3 9
HARMONIX
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

SingStar 8
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY

EyePet 7
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Hail to the Chimp 3
WIDELOAD GAMES
Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

Kung Fu Rider 3
JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-based rubbish. A terrible example of a Move game.

PlayStation Move Heroes 7
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

The Shoot 6
COHORT STUDIOS
A good Move rail shooter. Cool presentation. It won't blow your skirt up forever, though.

RECOMMENDED Sports Champions 8
ZINDAGI GAMES
Despite a few quirks this is the must-have Move title.

Yoostar 2 7
BLITZ GAME STUDIOS
Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

RECOMMENDED de Blob 2 9
BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Joyfulness, digitally realised. Infectious.

RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet 2 9
MEDIA MOLECULE
Like the original it's innovative and never-ending. Improves upon an amazing product.

RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

RACING

Blur 7
BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise 9
CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

Colin McRae: DiRT 9
CODEMASTERS
Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

Colin McRae: DiRT 2 7
CODEMASTERS
Flashy and drives fine but it's style over substance here.

NEW RECOMMENDED DiRT 3 8
CODEMASTERS
A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound. The gymkhana events are a highlight.



GRAN TURISMO SPORT 9
DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL
PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16
"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

Fuel 4
ASOBO STUDIOS
Huge, but buggy, boring and undercooked.

RECOMMENDED F1 2010 9
CODEMASTERS
A white-knuckle racer and an authentic title. Heaps better with a Logitech wheel

Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights 7
JUICE GAMES
Stout and glossy. Not too deep though.

Who you gonna call?



If you're wondering why the only hint of Louis Tully, the fifth *Ghostbuster*, in the *Ghostbusters* videogame was an empty desk with a note that said 'Gone home sick' it's because Rick Moranis declined to return to the role. "He made so much money off of *Honey I Shrunk The Kids* that he retired. He just doesn't want to work anymore," Sierra's Ben Borth explained to *Das Gamer*. Moranis actually left the film industry in 1997, six years after the 1991 loss of his wife, Anne, to liver cancer. As a single parent he decided to put raising his kids in front of making movies.

Midnight Club: Los Angeles 7
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
Visually weak at times. Great customisation and seamless racing.

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers 9
UNITED FRONT GAMES
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

NEW MotoGP 10/11 6
MONUMENTAL GAMES
Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

MotorStorm 10
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Fast, hard and dirty. Things have come on a lot since 2007 though.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Boasts split-screen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MotorStorm Apocalypse 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

MX vs. ATV Reflex 7
RAINBOW STUDIOS
Motocross freaks will love it. Needed a little more zest though.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 9
CRITERION GAMES
Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful arcade racing.

Nail'd 7
TECHLAND
Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer that needed a bit more dev time.

RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed 9
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Tops even *GT5* in many crucial areas. Features Mount Panorama.

Need for Speed: Undercover 5
EA BLACK BOX
Faulty and adds nothing since *Most Wanted*.

RECOMMENDED Pure 9
BLACK ROCK STUDIOS
One of the best arcade racers on the market.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID 9
CODEMASTERS
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good but lacks the *Race Driver* vintage, despite the name.

SBK-X: Superbike World Championship 7
MILESTONE
Inches in front of *MotoGP 09/10*. Purists may still hate on it.

SEGA Rally 7
SEGA RACING STUDIO
Familiar, old-school arcade fun, though it feels tired in 2011.

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing 7
SUMO DIGITAL
Fun but shallow. Copies from the best but missing a crucial spark.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second 8
BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

SuperCar Challenge 7
EUTECHNYX
Admirable effort but feels a little bland.

Superstars V8: Next Challenge 7
MILESTONE
An improvement but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

Test Drive Unlimited 2 7
EDEN GAMES
Massive and ambitious but the cars handle like go-karts in glue. Second-rate visuals, too. Playable but disappointing.

RECOMMENDED WRC 8
MILESTONE
Drab graphics, imperfect sound, but a joyfully robust driving model.

RPG/ACTION RPG

Alpha Protocol 5
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

Ar tonelico Qoga: Knell of Ar Ciel 7
GUST
Defiantly old-school JRPG. One for the fans.

Cross Edge 3
COMPILE HEART
Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

DC Universe Online 7
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
Pretty but shallow, and expensive subs too.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins 9
BIOWARE
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II 8
BIOWARE
Accessible but lacks immersion. One step forward and two steps back from *Origins*.

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
Simply put: awesome.

Hyperdimension Neptunia 8
IDEA FACTORY
A pastiche on modern videogames. Very, very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

ESSENTIAL Fallout 3 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
It's *Oblivion* in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and it's utterly brilliant.

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas 8
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII 8
SQUARE ENIX
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action but missing a little magic.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 7
VICARIOUS VISIONS
A compelling romp but the button-mashing play needs updating.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2 10
BIOWARE
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi. An action RPG without peer.

Nier 7
CAVIA UNRELEASED
Decent enough, but there are richer experiences elsewhere.

Resonance of Fate 6
TRI-ACE
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel 6
ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

Valkyria Chronicles 8
SEGA WOW
Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

SHOOTER

RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator 9
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever. Beyond brutal.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A top-tier shooter with a deeply dedicated online community, but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 8
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN
Grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2 9
2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spiced to near-perfection.

BlackSite: Area 51 5
MIDWAY STUDIOS - AUSTIN
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.



BORDERLANDS 9
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4
"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better. It takes the best elements from RPGs and fuses them to a superb shooter. The result: the most rewarding co-op to date, and there's a stack of great DLC for it too. Great value."

RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway 8
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made, and certainly the most realistic.

NEW Brink 7
SPLASH DAMAGE
Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

Bulletstorm 7
PEOPLE CAN FLY
Inventive but saves the best stuff for the final couple of hours. Graphically struggles, too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare 10
INFINITY WARD
It's still relentlessly exciting.

ESSENTIAL Modern Warfare 2 10
INFINITY WARD
Like three games stuffed into one. We still love the co-op Spec Ops mode.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops 9
TREYARCH
A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War 10
TREYARCH
A class act. War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies.

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood 7
TECHLAND
A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter that's better than you probably think.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena 8
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS
Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

Condemned 2: Bloodshot 9
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 2 9
CRYTEK
Diabolically pretty and challenging. A welcome reprieve from the glut of corridor shooters that demands intelligence and grit.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness 9
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Stunning, original and gory as hell. Hopefully the sequel rocks this hard.

F.E.A.R. 8
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS
A chilling ride, but the graphics could've been sharper.

F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin 7
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

Haze 6
FREE RADICAL DESIGN
Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal AI.

RECOMMENDED Homefront 8
KAOS STUDIOS
Polished but blink-and-you'll-miss-it single player. A fine alternative to CoD multi, though.

ESSENTIAL Killzone 2 10
GUERRILLA GAMES
Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.

RECOMMENDED Killzone 3 9
GUERRILLA GAMES
Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline. It's also a winner with Move.

Legendary 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
A rushed mess. Terrible.

RECOMMENDED MAG 9
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Shooter junkies take heed: this is where it's at for online combat.

RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor 8
DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

Medal of Honor: Airborne 6
EA LOS ANGELES
Short and lacks innovation. Too many problems.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge 8
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising 8
CODEMASTERS
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint: Red River 8
CODEMASTERS
A massive improvement on its predecessor. Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box 9
EA UK / VALVE
Get it for Portal, keep it for Half-Life 2.

RECOMMENDED Portal 2 9
VALVE
One of the most brilliant games ever.

Quantum of Solace 7
TREYARCH
Has too many faults to be compelling.

RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man 10
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A fantastic launch title with sweet weapons.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

Rogue Warrior 3
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

Singularity 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

NEW Sniper: Ghost Warrior 5
CITY INTERACTIVE
The novelty will be enough for sniper fans. Regular FPS folk won't be able to forgive its sloppy execution.

TimeShift 6
SABER INTERACTIVE
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Slick, good-looking and utterly engaging.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Not as good or as cool as the first one.

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
Scrappy throughout. Great concept, bogus execution.

Merchant of menace

British comic Stephen Merchant's portrayal of Wheatley, the malfunctioning robotic sphere in *Portal 2*, ranks as one of the funniest and most entertaining performances in videogame history. The *Extras* star and frequent Ricky Gervais collaborator later admitted the role was very exhausting, and [spoiler] he was initially intimidated by the character's switch from good to evil, but has said he'd return for *Portal 3* should Valve choose to make one.



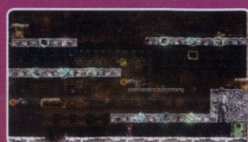
SPORTS

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa 7
EA CANADA
FIFA 10 with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.

NEW AFL Live 6
BIG ANT
Does a decent job of things and it's better than *Rugby League Live*.



THE BEST PSN GAMES ON PlayStation®Store



BRAID
DEVELOPER: HOTHEAD
PLAYERS: 1
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man.



PIXELJUNK SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Q-GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
Take control of a tiny ship and navigate your way through various caverns, rescuing any survivors along the way. Of course, there's interesting gameplay mechanics thrown into the mix, such as fluid water and lava dynamics that need to be used to solve puzzles.



FLIGHT CONTROL HD
DEVELOPER: FIREMINT
PLAYERS: 1-4
Possibly the most addictive and accessible PSN title available. The premise is simply to guide the aircraft on-screen to their respective runways. That's it – but you'll be totally hooked. One of the best games to play with PlayStation Move too.



PAC-MAN CE DX
DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
More than an update, this is a revolution. The 'CE' stands for 'Championship Edition', and is a mash of different maps and modes revolving around guiding Paccers through the dots and waiting ghosts. This is begging to be your new addiction.



PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES
DEVELOPER: POPCAP GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
The smash hit on PC lands on PSN, and this tower defense title plays beautifully with a controller. You have a variety of plants to defend your end of the lawn while the undead shuffle and eat their way across. Extremely addictive and actually loaded with braaains.

B is for bonkers



Apparently there's ongoing confusion as to why Ford RS200's are sought after today. They're a sweet sled to own in *DIRT 3* but they had no success in Group B rallying, never winning a race. In the case of the 24 Evo models we imagine it's because, with a 0-100km/h time alleged as low as 2.1 seconds they're quicker than the Porsche 959 and Ferrari F40 of the same era. The mid-mounted 2.1L 4-cylinder in these tiny cars produces just under 600 horses. In early 2011 one went for US\$159,500 (RM Auctions, USA) and another for £126,120 (Coy's Auctions, UK).

Ashes Cricket 2009 6
TRANSMISSION GAMES
Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for some multiplayer beauty.

Backbreaker 7
NATURALMOTION
Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

Beijing 2008 5
EUROCOM
Not the worst of its type but far from a game to buy and keep.

EA Sports MMA 7
EA TIBURON
Great controls but struggles to be convincing.



FIFA 11 9
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22
"While *FIFA 12* looms, *FIFA 11* remains a bafflingly brilliant update. If you've skipped the last few *FIFA* updates boost the score by one. Seriously, it's that good. This is the best-selling sports game in the world and it's not hard to see why."

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion 9
EA CANADA
Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

International Cricket 2010 7
TRICKSTARGAMES
Not the most comprehensive cricket game but certainly the best when you're on the pitch.

John Daly's ProStroke Golf 5
GUSTO GAMES
Those looking for a high production value golf game should give this the shaft.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K11 8
VISUAL CONCEPTS / KUSH GAMES
Hard court high priest Michael Jordan stars in perhaps the best basketball game ever.

RECOMMENDED NBA Jam 8
EA CANADA
A faithful and fun update to the '90s classic. He's on fire!

Pro Evolution Soccer 2011 8
KONAMI
Good for a goal fix, still second best overall. Get *FIFA 11*.

Rugby League Live 5
BIG ANT
Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate. The Melbourne crew at Big Ant did a slightly better job with *AFL Live*.

Shaun White Skateboarding 6
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

Shaun White Snowboarding 6
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

Skate 9
EA BLACK BOX
A well-balanced masterpiece and true *Tony Hawk* killer. Trumped by its sequels.

RECOMMENDED Skate 2 9
EA BLACK BOX
One of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense and packed with natural lines and the balance is sublime.

RECOMMENDED Skate 3 8
EA BLACK BOX
Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

RECOMMENDED Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12 8
EA TIBURON
Great golf game but we don't like the way the day one DLC is teased via the career mode.

Tony Hawk's Project 8 7
NEVERSOFT
No real reason to revisit this post-*Skate* at all.

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground 6
NEVERSOFT
Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

Tony Hawk: RIDE 4
ROBOMODO
Pure frustration made plastic.

RECOMMENDED Top Spin 4 8
2K CZECH
More accessible than its predecessor with a DualShock, as the Move controls are spotty.

RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010 8
YUKE'S
The new undisputed baron of sports fighting.

Vancouver 2010 6
EUROCOM
A handful of events that last one afternoon.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4 8
SUMO DIGITAL
Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution 8
FIRAXIS GAMES
Great fun and shockingly addictive.

RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E. 8
EUGEN SYSTEMS
Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy. Better with Move, too.

The Sims 3 7
THE SIMS STUDIO
Waiting to pounce on the right type of gamer.

Stormrise 4
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
A cack-handed, future war mess.

Tom Clancy's EndWar 7
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Far from a finished product. Works, but it's hardly an essential purchase.

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

2001:
THE ITALIAN JOB

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION GENRE: RACING DEVELOPER: PIXELOGIC, LTD
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: APPROX. \$20 (EBAY)



Loved by movie buffs the world over *The Italian Job* is a veritable institution in UK cinema. We're talking about the 1969 original, starring Michael Caine, and not the 2003 Marky Mark version (though, to be fair, the latter – more an homage than a remake – actually wasn't a bad movie and was generally well-received).

Both versions have been adapted into videogames but it's only 2001's *The Italian Job* for PSone that's worth discussing.

Movie tie-ins are regularly amongst the worst games available on shelves at any given time. They keep coming because, for reasons that continue to elude us, there are still gamers willing to part with their hard-earned to suffer through the likes of *Thor: God of Thunder*. However, while most movie adaptations are little more than just another piece of half-arsed merchandise to flog in association with a cinema release, adaptations of older properties are usually a different story. Adaptations of past classics don't have to be rushed out to coincide with a theatrical release date. Indeed, the very motivation behind making them is usually a real love of the source material (as opposed to contractual obligation).

This game deviated from the movie in order to bolster the amount of vehicular action it could offer but the gist is the same: a crew of lovable English gangsters set about stealing four million dollars in gold bullion from a Turin traffic jam in three Mini Coopers and try to get it out of Italy. The game features two cities, London and Turin. The first slab of the game was set in London and the remaining parts in Turin.

Simply put it's a mission-based driving game where you follow arrows from one destination to another. Your opponents are the rozzers and a series of particularly nasty time limits.

The handling is decent, if soggy at low speeds, and everything moves along at a decent clip. The visuals are as good as you could ask for on a system with 2MBs of memory and a decent Michael Caine soundalike and music plucked directly from the movie itself gives the audio an edge. You'll be whistling Quincy Jones' irresistible cockney rhyming slang filled 'Getta Bloomin' Move On' for weeks.

This game was published by SCI in PAL territories (SCI would later join with Eidos before Eidos was acquired by Square Enix) but by Rockstar in North America. Based on Rockstar's proven ability to faithfully re-imagine old movies as awesome games (*The Warriors*) we can't help but wish Rockstar's interest in *The Italian Job* had come this year rather than a decade ago. *The Italian Job* may have been a great stab at capturing the camp, '60s feel of the film back in 2001 but it was at least a year too late. A PSone game released after the PS2 became available was always going to have a tough time causing much of a ripple. *The Italian Job*'s woes were only compounded by the fact it came out the same week as *Grand Theft Auto III*. We've always been a little disappointed you don't actually get to drive the Minis up into the back of the bus after the final heist too.

Like most PSone games it's tough to play these days but *The Italian Job* joins curios like *World's Scariest Police Chases* on the list of little-known post-*Driver* gems that came out before *GTA* discovered the third dimension and made the open-world genre de rigueur.

THE SELF PRESERVATION SOCIETY

In 1968, four million dollars in gold bars would have weighed about 3200kg – requiring each of the three Minis to carry about 1070kg in addition to the driver and passenger. Since a 1968 Mini only weighs 630kg each of these vehicles would have had to carry one-and-a-half times its own weight in gold.

Next month

Assassin's Creed Revelations

New questions about the game promising to have all the answers!

PLUS

Interview: Uncharted 3

Far Cry 3 exposed

F.E.A.R. 3 and
Call of Juarez:

The Cartel reviewed!

Renegade Ops

RAGE

Hitman Absolution

Birds of Prey

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